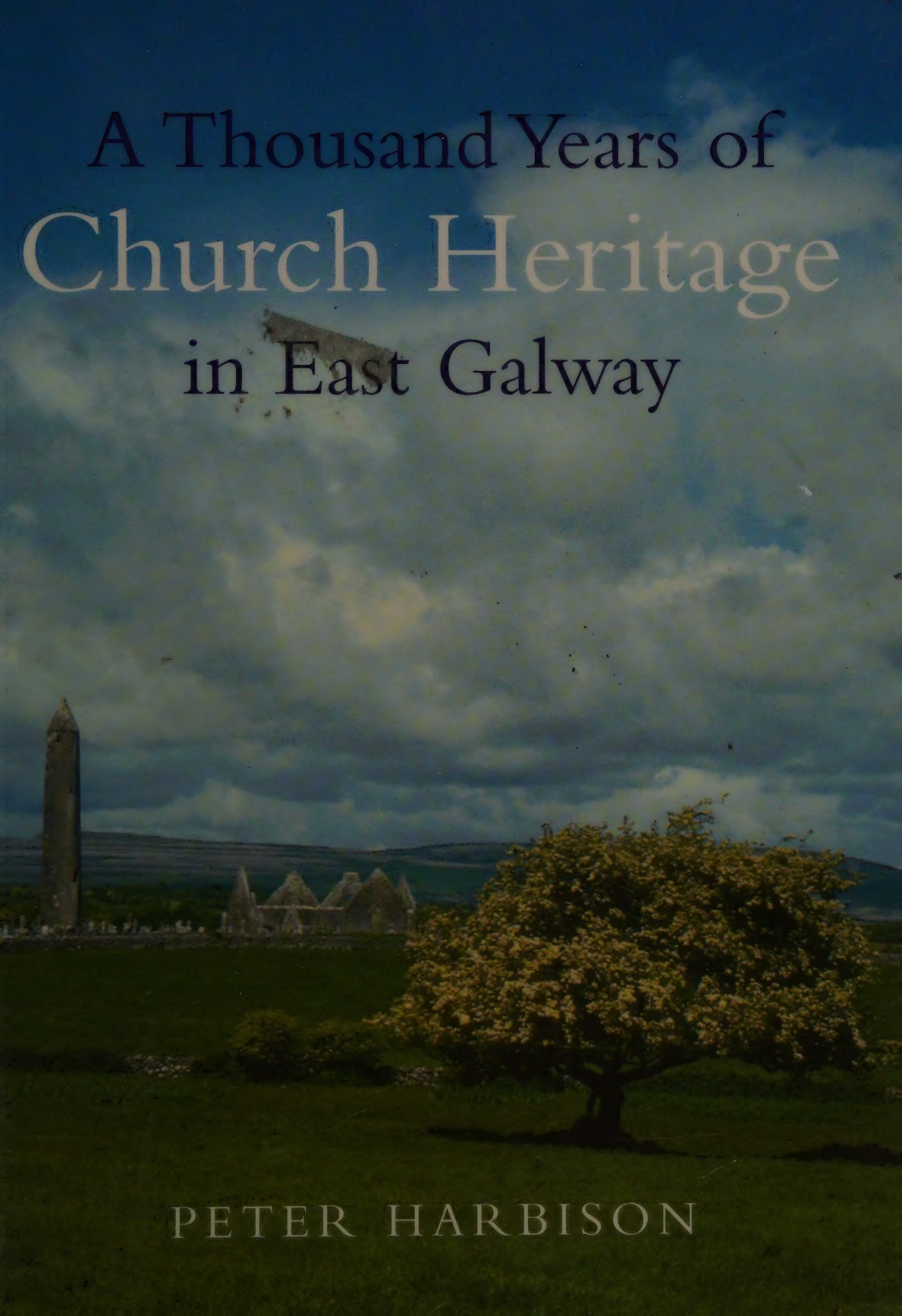
A Thousand Years of Church Heritage in East Galway



PETER HARBISON

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PETER HARBISON

EAST GALWAY, between Corrib and Shannon and Clare and Roscommon, is, for too many people, an area to race through, to get elsewhere farther east or west. This book should make them stop in their tracks, and realise what major (and even minor) church gems there are to be discovered there. It includes earlier and later medieval monuments such as Kilmacduagh (Galway's Glendalough), with its famous leaning tower, and the attractive ruined friaries of Kilconnell and Ross Errilly among others.

But the major surprises of the book are the rich and largely undiscovered heritage of stained glass which can be explored there. Labane and Loughrea respectively saw the genesis and the high point of 'Celtic Revival' stained glass in Ireland with some of the most famous products of Sarah Purser's *An Túr Gloine* (Tower of Glass) studio. But this impetus towards the development of an Irish school of stained glass inspired parish priests and rectors in the eastern part of the County to follow suit, and decorate their smaller parish churches with some remarkable, yet little known stained glass, the illustrations of which make up a major focus of this fascinating book. A wonderful microcosm of Irish church art down through the centuries.

FRONT PHOTOGRAPH: Nestling at the foot of the Burren, St. Colmáns ancient monastery at Kilmacduagh deserves more fame as one of Galway's most venerable Christian sites.

A THOUSAND YEARS OF CHURCH HERITAGE IN EAST GALWAY

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A Thousand Years of Church Heritage in East Galway

PETER HARBISON

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IRELAND'S West
galway east great place, great people
Fáilte Ireland

FRONTISPIECE: Stained glass window of *St. Robertus*, of *c.*1900. by Selwyn Image in the Catholic church at Labane, Co. Galway.

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Preface

EAST GALWAY CONTAINS a wealth of ecclesiastical heritage of architectural, archaeological, historical, spiritual, artistic, visual and visual significance.

The area presents a very fine collection of stained glass, in particular from the Celtic Revival Period. Whereas the stained glass at St. Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, is recognised nationally, that of the smaller churches in the other towns and villages of East Galway is virtually unknown outside specialist circles. This rich inheritance of stained glass art, which Dr. Peter Harbison describes as "Ireland's greatest gift to European twentieth century art," was commissioned by the Churches, and paid for by local congregations. This great treasure trove of Celtic Revival art has been managed and conserved by both main religious denominations over the last century. The support, encouragement, and patronage of this art form, of a uniquely Irish nature, were, of course, spearheaded in the West of Ireland by Edward Martyn of Tulira, and by his friends and associates. The clergy of the area also embraced this new art form wholeheartedly.

East Galway also contains very important early Christian sites such as Clonfert Cathedral, Kilmacduagh, and Kilbennon.

Magnificent medieval abbeys such as Abbeyknockmoy and Ross Errilly are another facet of the history of the church in East Galway.

The value of this resource was recognised by the Forward Planning Section of Galway County Council, in particular by Ms. Mary Flynn, Community Planner, during the implementation of the first EU/ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/ Galway County Council co-funded Urban and Village Renewal Program-me which took place from 1995 to 1999.

Galway County Council flagged the possibility of developing tourism trails based on this resource in its application for funding for European Structural Funds in 1998, and also in its funding application under the Pilot Initiative on Tourism and the Environment of the Operational Programme for Tourism 1995-1999 at the same time.

Funding was not forthcoming at that point, but it was decided to

continue trying to develop this magnificent resource. The theme was elaborated upon and subsequently expanded upon by the then County Manager, Mr. Donal O'Donoghue, into one that would encompass a broader ecclesiastical theme. The Council's Forward Planning Section was asked to look at the whole area of ecclesiastical heritage and potential trail development in the eastern part of the county. The suggestion of an historically based route selection, comprising early Christian, Medieval, and Celtic Revival Ecclesiastical Heritage routes, was put forward, and developed with Mr. John Tierney, then Assistant County Manager, leading a newly formed steering group which was established on 7th March 2000. The members of the inaugural steering group were Mr. John Tierney, Chair, Mr. Donal Guilfoyle, Bord Fáilte, Fr. Cathal Geraghty, Administrator, St. Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, Rev. Canon Trevor Sullivan, Rector of Aughrim and Canon of St. Brendan's Cathedral, Clonfert, Ms. Beatrice Kelly, The Heritage Council, Mr Martin Bradley, Ireland West Tourism, Mr Paul McMahon, Dúchas, and Mr. Gus McCarthy, Forward Planning Section, Galway County Council.

Over the years there have been some changes in personnel representing the various organisations on the steering committee and the following is a list of people who have worked on the project.

In June 2000 Ms. Marie Mannion, was appointed Heritage Officer with Galway County Council and became a member of the steering group, and Ms. Mary Flynn, Community Planner, Galway County Council, became a member of the steering group in September 2000. Mr. Frank Dawson, Director of Service, Galway County Council, took over the role of Chair of the steering group in March 2001. Mr. Enda Thompson, Strategic Projects Officer, Galway County Council became a member of the steering group in March 2001, while Ms. Karen Smyth, Galway East Tourism became a member of the steering group in March 2002.

Galway County Council Heritage Office established Heritage Networks throughout the County in 2002, and it was decided to invite three representatives of the Heritage Networks to join the steering group in March 2002 in order to represent the voice of the local heritage and community organisations. Dr. Tony Claffey was nominated to represent the Tuam and Oranmore Local Area Heritage Networks, Mr. Christy Cunniffe was nominated to represent the Ballinasloe Local Area Heritage Network and Ms. Claire Besnyoe was nominated to represent the Loughrea Local Area Heritage Network.

Mr. Frank Donnelly, Architect, Department of Environment, Heritage

& Local Government and Ms. Jackie Donnelly, Architect, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, have also served on the steering committee for a period of time. Mr. Brian Flynn, Ireland West Tourism, also attended various meetings of the steering group, as did Mr Alan Farrell, Galway County Council.

Ms. Sheena Doyle, Fáilte Ireland, joined the steering group in November 2002 and Ms. Anne Melia, Ireland West Tourism, joined in June 2004. In November 2002 Dr. Peter Harbison and Ms. Angela Bane were commissioned to undertake a baseline report on the Ecclesiastical Heritage of East Galway that would assess the potential for the development of these sites.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Harbison and Ms. Angela Bane for the quality of the report which they produced. The steering group considered that it represented a very valuable resource and decided that the information contained therein should be disseminated to a wider audience.

It was agreed that a brochure entitled *Galway East Ecclesiastical Heritage Trail* as well as this book entitled *A Thousand Years of Church Heritage in East Galway* would be published.

Funding for this publication has been provided by Galway County Council and by the Heritage Council under *Galway County Heritage Plan 2004-2008* and also by the Heritage Council's Publication Grant 2005.

I would like to pay a special tribute to all of the Mayors and elected members of Galway County Council, Ballinasloe Town Council, Loughrea Town Council and Tuam Town Council, who have given support and assistance to the project since its inception. A special word of thanks is also due to the archbishop, bishops and members of the clergy for their continued support and encouragement.

I also wish to thank Mr. Pat Gallagher, Galway County Manager, for his facilitation of the project through staff and resources allocations.

I would like to pay a special tribute to Ms Susan Waine, Ashfield Press, for her expertise, skills and attention to detail in helping to ensure that this is a quality publication. Thanks also to Mr. Tony Roche and the Photographic Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. Hany Marzouk, Mr. Jarlath Canny, Mr. Michael Concannon, Dr. Peter Harbison and Ms. Marie Mannion for their photographs which illustrate the pages of this publication, which we hope will serve as an educational, heritage, tourism and community resource, creating an awareness, knowledge and pride in the rich ecclesiastical heritage of East Galway.

The day-to-day development of this project could not have taken place without the skill, interest, and professionalism of Ms. Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, who gave so generously of her time to all who worked with her over the years on this steering committee.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Peter Harbison for his enthusiasm, professionalism and sheer hard work which has ensured that *A Thousand Years of Church Heritage in East Galway* will stand as testimony to an appreciation of our cherished ecclesiastical heritage in another thousand years.

Céad míle buíochas do gach éinne a thug Lámh chuidithe san obair seo.

MR. FRANK DAWSON,
Chairperson,
East Galway Ecclesiastical Heritage Steering Group

Foreword by PETER HARBISON

EAST GALWAY MIGHT SEEM to many to be a flat and uninspiring plain between Corrib and Shannon, encouraging motorists to speed through it so as to get faster to their destinations farther east or west. The reality, however, is very different. The Slieve Aughty hills in the south of the County offer wonderful opportunities for the walker or cyclist to sniff the mountain air and get away from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, while the undulating countryside further north is full of surprises for the adventuresome traveller. This I discovered myself in 2003 when Angela Bane and I undertook a survey of the ecclesiastical heritage of East Galway for an enterprising and imaginative steering committee, comprising representatives of local government, tourist, church and community interests, whose names are given on the inside back flap. This book is the artistic and architectural fruit of that survey, which opened my eyes as to just how much of a thousand years of Ireland's Christian heritage is concentrated in the eastern half of County Galway.

To a certain extent, East Galway could be taken as a microcosm of the country as a whole, presenting – as it does – a remarkable panorama of medieval monastic buildings and modern churches of a kind found widely throughout the rest of the country. But East Galway has some very special features which are either unique or rarely matched elsewhere. For instance, the quality of its medieval masonry retained a high standard in simple structures like Kiltiernan church, or the more complex Round Tower and O'Heyne's church at Kilmacduagh – Galway's all too often unsung gem that rivals Glendalough both in the variety of its monuments and in its majestic setting at the foot of the Burren. As further examples, the carvings of the chancel arch in St. Mary's in Tuam, and the west doorway of Clonfert cathedral, can be seen as representing the apogee of Irish ornament in the Romanesque style that is almost baroque in the exuberance of its decorative patterns. That same style of architectural sculpture continued with vitality into the thirteenth century at Abbeyknockmoy and, more particularly, at Drumacoo, where it can be seen to merge gradually with the Gothic which had already long replaced it in areas east of the Shannon.

The pre-1200 church at Kiltiernan has fine-quality masonry, but is not listed elsewhere in this volume because of access difficulties.

One of the more notable features of the western landscape of the later medieval period is the number of abbeys and friaries of the continental religious orders – Cistercians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Carmelites among others – and East Galway preserves some of the finest of these structures at places like Kilconnell and Claregalway, where their tall slender towers add a welcome vertical emphasis to the skyline. Their churches occasionally display fine flamboyant tombs, and among the memorable spectacles they offer are large east windows, with mullions weaving a variety of curving patterns that are, alas, devoid of the presumably coloured glass which once filled them.

But that loss is more than made up for in their twentieth-century counterparts. It was the realisation of the extent and quality of the stained glass in East Galway churches which surprised me most during the course of the survey, where I had initially expected it only in Loughrea Cathederal, one of the foremost showpieces of Irish stained glass. Loughrea, and the medieval churches already mentioned, have of course been well flagged by guidebooks as being among the highlights of a visit to East Galway. But what I hope this volume will make clear to a wide audience – both inside and outside the county – is the surprising richness of East Galway's modern stained glass in more out-of-the-way places where one might not expect it.

The credit for this remarkable state of affairs must be given to one far-seeing and talented layman, Edward Martyn of Tullira, near Ardrahan, who

wanted to counter the widespread import of repetitive foreign-made glass by getting Irish craftsmen and women to be the main producers of church furniture, including glass. His efforts, which started a nation-wide movement in his own parish church at Labane, found their culmination in a felicitous co-operation with churchmen in Loughrea to decorate the newly-built Cathedral there with imaginative Irish-made glass. This was largely supplied by Sarah Purser's *An Túr Gloine*, 'The Tower Glass', which the Loughrea commissions helped to make into one of the two major Irish stained glass studios, whose products are among the country's greatest contributions to European art of the twentieth century. But what makes East Galway even more remarkable – indeed unique – in this connection is that the distinguished lead given by the diocesan Cathedral percolated with panache down to subsidiary churches of the diocese – and not just into the more important examples such as St. Michael's in Ballinasloe, but also into many of the smaller outlying parishes and indeed, even into the neighbouring dioceses in the county as well. Walking into a small country church and coming upon some unexpected stained-glass gem has been, for me, one of the real joys in working on this East Galway survey, and I can only hope that those who browse through the illustrations of this book will be able to share my own delight by going out and discovering these windows for themselves. It will be a treat that will have been very much worth the effort, and one which will add an unexpected richness to any visit to East Galway.

Obviously, it has not been possible to cover here every church in the area covered by the survey, and I hope that I may be forgiven if there are inconsistencies in the periodisation of monuments, and if my choice of sites has omitted items that others might consider more worthy of inclusion. If, furthermore, I may occasionally have erred in my artistic attributions, I might express the wish that this work may lead to further research on the material presented here – which, in turn, might encourage others to reveal the wealth of stained glass in other parts of the county and country.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the many members of the steering committee who have been of such great assistance in a variety of ways, not the least of which was bringing some churches to my attention at places which I would not otherwise have visited. A special word of thanks to Angela Bane, who was co-author of the original report, and to Marie Mannion whose tireless efforts have ensured that the original survey format has been successfully transferred to book form with the ever-helpful guiding hand of the publisher, Susan Waine.

Ecclesiastical Heritage Sites – Galway East

EARLY CHRISTIAN SITES

1 Clonfert Cathedral
2 Drumacoo Church
3 Kilbennon
4 Killeely
5 Killursa
6 Kilmacduagh
7 Kiltartan
8 Tuam: St Marys Church of Ireland Cathedral

LATER MEDIEVAL SITES

9 Abbey (Kilnaleghin)
10 Abbeyknockmoy Cistercian Abbey
11 Annaghdown Ecclesiastical Complex
12 Athenry Dominican Friary
13 Ballynakill Abbey
14 Claregalway Franciscan Friary
15 Clontuskert Augustinian Abbey
16 Creevaghbaun Church
17 Dunmore Augustinian Friary
18 Eglish
19 Kilconnell Franciscan Friary
20 Kilcorban Dominican Friary
21 Loughrea Carmelite Friary
22 Meelick Franciscan Friary
23 Portumna Dominican Friary
24 Ross Errilly Franciscan Friary
25 Tuam: Templejarlath / St Jarlath's Church

CELTIC REVIVAL SITES

26 Ahascragh Catholic Church
27 Ardrahan Church of Ireland Church
28 Aughrim Holy Trinity Church
29 Ballinasloe: St John's Church
30 Ballinasloe: St Michael's Church
31 Ballinderreen Catholic Church
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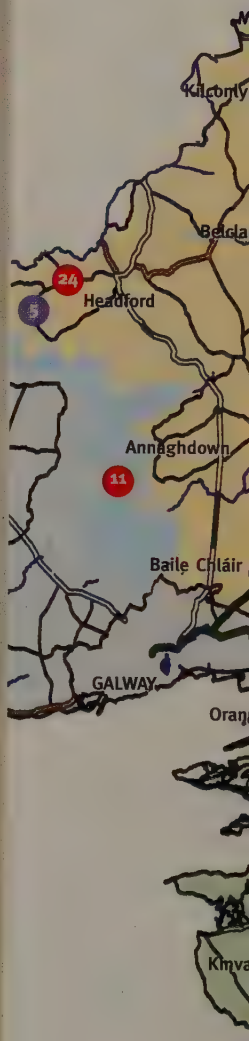
39 Gurteen Catholic Church
40 Kilconnell Catholic Church
41 Killeenadeema Catholic Church
42 Killererin Catholic Church
43 Kiltormer Catholic Church
44 Killure Catholic Church
45 Labane Catholic Church
46 Loughrea: St. Brendan's Cathedral
47 Peterswell Catholic Church
48 Tirneevin Catholic Church
49 Tuam: Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption



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GEOGRAPHICAL TRAILS

(These colours refer to the Galway East Ecclesiastical Trail. Free brochure available from Tourist Offices).

- Ballinasloe / Portumna
- Gort / Loughrea
- Tuam / Athenry

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Ms. Sheena Doyle, Failte Ireland
Mr. Alan Farrell, Administrative Officer, Community & Enterprise, Galway County Council
Ms. Mary Flynn, Executive Planner, Forward Planning, Galway County Council
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Ms. Beatrice Kelly, The Heritage Council
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Early Christian Sites

1. Clonfert Cathedral

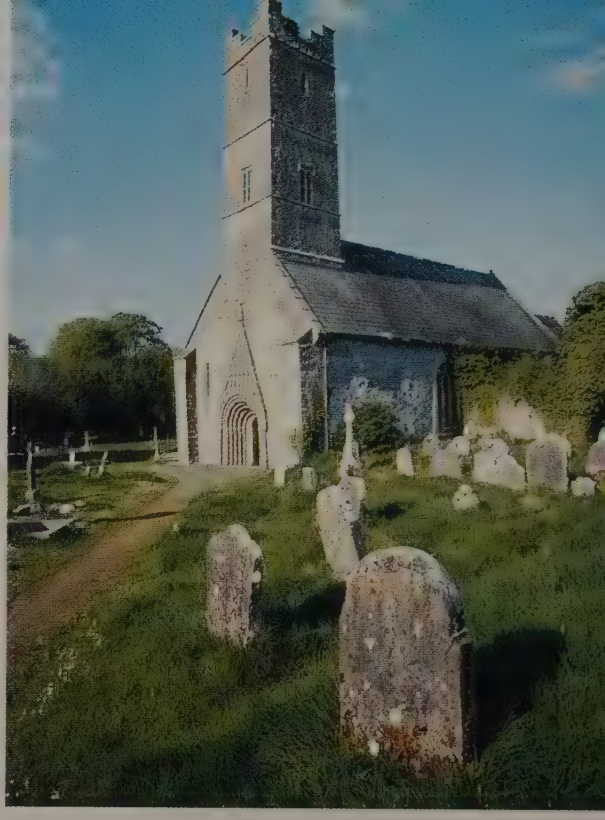
CLONFERT IS UNDOUBTEDLY the most important church in East Galway and is known far outside the bounds of Connacht and, indeed, Ireland as well. It owes its importance to the internationally-known saint who is traditionally said to lie buried somewhere within its walls – Brendan the Navigator. His reputation rests largely on the *Navigatio Brendani*, an only partially fanciful tale of the saint's island-hopping voyages with his disciples in the north Atlantic, before he returned to Ireland and died at his sister's convent at Annaghdown in 577/583, from where his body was borne to Clonfert for burial. Though in the style of the Old Irish *immrama* (travel tales), the *Navigatio* appears to have been written originally in Latin (possibly on the Continent) around 800 and, in subsequent centuries, was translated into many European vernacular languages – which is how St Brendan's name became widely known throughout Europe.

A long approach-road leads to the Cathedral which can be seen as a gabled structure dominated by an almost incongruously tall tower standing above the famous Romanesque-style doorway in the centre of the west wall. Writing in *The Bell* in 1942, Frank O'Connor noted that the doorway

> gets added force from that preposterous and charming little tower which, for all its tapering Franciscan elegance, is far too heavy for the church-front and has an air of intense decorum wildly at variance with the reckless fantasy of the porch. If both were to come alive the tower would go to tea with the rector while the porch got run in for being drunk and disorderly.

The reckless fantasy he refers to is in the exuberant decoration of this sandstone doorway, which must be regarded as one of the great high-points of Irish architectural decoration in the Romanesque style, executed

◀ The richly-carved west doorway of Clonfert Cathedral, of *c.*1200, makes it one of the most decorative of all Irish churches ornamented in the Romanesque style.



▲ Given that Clonfert is the final resting-place of St. Brendan, Europe's most famous mariner and ocean explorer of the Early Middle Ages, it is perhaps appropriate that the fifteenth-century chancel arch should bear the carving of a mermaid. She carries a comb and mirror – perhaps a symbol of her vanity.

A tall fifteenth-century tower above the doorway of Clonfert Cathedral adds stature to the much older church with decorative doorway that has been a diocesan centre for many centuries.

around or shortly before 1200 by a group of masons who did St. Brendan proud by leaving scarcely any part of the doorway uncarved (the other great Galway high-points in the style being the chancel of St Mary's Cathedral, Tuam, and the window at Annaghdown, where St. Brendan died). The motifs on the engaged columns at Clonfert vary from interlace to chevron (zig-zag), plant and circular designs, and they bear capitals with feline faces and masks, among other things. The arches above stand out contrastingly in a very high relief, with ornamental bosses, animals biting a continuous semi-circular roll and other carvings more difficult to define, and conceived probably not without some influence from foreign – perhaps French – churches of the period. These arches are surmounted

by the most ornamental tangent-gable known from Irish Romanesque, the lower part occupied by an arcade enclosing human heads at the top of the arches and leaving the remainder plain beneath (probably painted originally, perhaps imitating Limoges enamels as Françoise Henry suggested), while the upper part is filled with a network of triangles. These are alternatively in high relief with foliate decoration, or in the form of recesses from which bearded and shaven heads emerge – one in the centre being more portrait-like than the rest. The sides of the sandstone doorway narrow as they ascend, following the old Irish church tradition of inclining jambs, though this became less noticeable when a new innermost order in limestone was inserted in the fifteenth century, featuring two saints.

The richness and variety of the sculpture on the Clonfert Cathedral doorway, of *c.*1200, displays human and animal masks and other motifs beautifully carved from a colourful but friable sandstone that continues to suffer much from weathering.

The empty vertical slots beneath the heads in the arcade above the rounded arch of the Clonfert Cathedral doorway may once have been painted, perhaps in imitation of enamelled metalwork from Limoges in France which also has comparable heads, leading to the speculation that the whole doorway may once have been embellished with bright colours.

This doorway forms the central feature of the Cathedral's western wall which has protruding *antae* at each corner that have correspondents in what was once the building's original east end – showing that the oldest part of the Cathedral was a simple rectangle. It doubtless had many wooden predecessors, for Clonfert was twice attacked by Vikings from the Shannon in 844 and 845 respectively, and it is recorded as also having fallen a prey to fire on at least three occasions.

As in so many other Irish cathedrals which were faced with the need for more space with an expanding congregation in the thirteenth century, the original twelfth-century rectangular building was extended around 1210-1225 with the creation of a new chancel with a very fine twin-light east window of close-fitting masonry, so typical of the so-called 'School of the West' in Connacht at the time. It was prabably then also that further space was provided with the addition of a north and south transept, of which only the latter survives, with corbels and a contemporary window – but in a roofless condition. The building was described in 1414 as being in need of repair, but the tower above the doorway is likely to have been built much later in the century. The arch constructed in the early thirteenth century to separate nave and choir must have been one of the parts of the building that was in need of repair, and it was duly replaced in the fifteenth century by the existing chancel arch bearing, incongruously, the helmeted head of an armed warrior of the period. The *Shell Guide* notes that the Cathedral was wrecked in the sixteenth century, partially re-edified for Church of Ireland use in the seventeenth, and poorly restored in the eighteenth and nineteenth – the activities of the latter including the parapet of the tower and the removal of plaster from the internal walls.

In addition to a thirteenth-century baptismal font, the interior also preserves the earliest monuments surviving at Clonfert in the form of two cross-decorated gravestones – one asking for a prayer for Baclat, and the other recording the name Becgan, both of which could date back as far as the ninth or tenth century. Who these people were, we have no way of knowing, but they do not feature among the list of bishops and abbots that we know of from Clonfert in the early Irish Annals.

When, as part of the twelfth-century Church Reform movement, Ireland was divided up into bishoprics at the Synod of Rathbreasail in the year 1111, Clonfert was given diocesan status, which it still bears in both Catholic and Church of Ireland churches. Air pollution, particularly within recent decades, has caused deterioration in the surface of the sandstone doorway, almost obliterating some of the decoration, and a plan was evolved in 2002 to do everything possible to stop the decay. So far, the doorway has been repointed, but the best method of tackling the stone decay has yet to be decided.

Not far away was an Augustinian abbey of St. Mary *de Portu Puro*, which

is alleged to have stood to the south-east of the Cathedral (according to Gwynn & Hadcock), and there was also a convent of nuns in the vicinity – neither of which have survived. Their nearest modern equivalent is the Emmanuel House of Providence founded in 1985 and standing out of sight behind the Cathedral. Adjoining it is the former Bishop's Palace that goes back to the seventeenth century and which is now in a sad state of disrepair – and beside it is a splendid yew walk which has, regretfully, begun to lose its trees, but is being restored in association with the Tree Council of Ireland.

2. Drumacoo Church

THE SAINT ASSOCIATED with the early monastery (or more probably nunnery) at Drumacoo is St. Sourney, or Assurnaidhe, and the site's proximity to Galway Bay makes it understandable that she was also venerated on the Aran Islands.

The present ruined church there grew out of an earlier church incorporated into it – as can be seen in the small off-centre west doorway with flat lintel. How much earlier is a matter of debate though and, given the comparative lateness of some early-looking churches in East Galway, it could be as late as the twelfth century. Opinions also differ as to what happened when the church was expanded early in the thirteenth century, but it would seem that at least the lower courses of the masonry of the north wall remained intact, while the original east and south walls were dismantled, and their contents re-used in the extended rectangular church. The original stone church thus occupied what is now the north-western corner of the present church ruin. This extended, and much larger, church was built in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Its east wall was provided with two acutely-pointed lancet windows, both linked and framed by mouldings in the style typical of the so-called 'School of the West' in the period c.1200-1225, though – unlike most other examples of the School's work – the exteriors of the windows lack corresponding mouldings. One of the windows is now blocked up with later masonry, and the capitals, though worn, suggest the form of fluted, perhaps scalloped, decoration on one, and foliate stems on a second – the third being too abraded to reveal its original decoration. There are two aumbrys, or niches, to the north of the window, and only one to the south – the reason for the latter to be explained below.

At the same time that the windows were built, the church was

◀ The south doorway of the church at Drumacoo shows the masons of 'The School of the West' adapting their late Romanesque decoration of undercut chevrons to the incoming Gothic style with pointed arch. The fearsome animals (see overleaf) on the capitals are one of the most attractive features of this portal, which dates probably from the 1220s.

Fabulous animals, feline masks and luxuriant foliage were carved on the capitals of the doorway at Drumacoo around the 1220s.

provided with a new doorway now in the south wall, and which is one of the minor – and latest – masterpieces of the School of the West, probably close to 1225 in date. It shows the School to have been finally influenced by the pointed arch of the Gothic style and – like its counterpart at Cong – has arches decorated with undercut chevron ornament strung out along a filleted moulding and having, inside it, further conjoined chevrons enclosing pyramidal shapes in relief. The capitals show remarkable boldness and inventiveness in the carving, with lively monsters, feline masks as well as stiff-leaf foliage, and the (partially restored) shafts supporting them are banded half-way up. It would appear that the south wall of the extended church became unstable at some period, and had to be replaced with another a few feet inside it – a process also observable in O'Heyne's church at Kilmacduagh where the two east windows are also off-centre for exactly the same reason. This re-build necessitated the re-siting of the doorway to its present position in the south wall, and the blocking of the second twin-aumbry to the south of the east windows, leaving the single one we see today.

To the north of the western end of the church is the burial ground of the St. George family, whose members also built the remarkable family 'cemetery' beside it. This is a Gothic structure of 1830 with buttresses on

the outside walls, a ponderous doorway and a large north window admitting light to shine on the large recumbent slabs of the St. George family vault, which take up most of the interior. The last burial they record was in 1877, and the slabs leave space for recording some more, should this ever be required. A plaque outside reminds us that the Irish Georgian Society restored the building – including the roof – in 1990. This acts as a parallel for the meritorious work executed by the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society around 1902 in providing new foundations for the old church described above.

The cult of St. Sourney has left its traces in the area near the church. St. Sourney's Bed is near the churchyard wall to the north of the church, and her bush lay near the path between the small car-park and the church. But the most noteworthy place of veneration is a well within a circular enclosure also to the north of the church where people may have bathed their eyes in the hope of a cure for which St. Sourney was famous.

3. Kilbennon

ST. BENEN, OR BENIGNUS, ALIAS MIONNÁN, is frequently said to have been a disciple of St. Patrick who followed him upon the episcopal throne of Armagh, and is often depicted in stained glass as a small boy standing beside the national apostle. But it is quite likely that there were two saints of the name, one of them of Connacht origin, who is venerated at the first station on the climb to Croagh Patrick, and commemorated in the smallest oratory in the country on the skyline of the Aran island of Inis Mór. He is also the one whose name is associated with Kilbennon, some two and a half miles north-west of Tuam, and where Tuam's patron saint, Jarlath, is said to have been his disciple.

The church surviving on the site may have been erected for the parish around or after 1428. It is a rectangular structure with a doorway of more recent vintage in the south wall, and windows in the east and west walls. Holes in the interior of the west wall suggest that there was a gallery in the church there. But placed in the window high up on the west wall is a single sandstone Romanesque voussoir with floral decoration which is

The ancient monastic site of Kilbennon is marked today by part of a Round Tower (11th century?) and the walls of a ruined late medieval church.

the only visible survivor of a stone church which must have stood on the site in the twelfth century.

Close by are the remains of a Round Tower, still standing to a height of about 50 feet, though missing its upper portions. It has a round-headed doorway of sandstone pointing north-eastwards towards the church, its lower stones finished unusually in the 'sparrow-pecking' technique. Though the date when the tower was constructed cannot be ascertained, it may well be older than the sandstone voussoir already mentioned, and making it likely that not even the Romanesque church was the first one on the site – others of wood having existed earlier.

In fact, it is likely that the site was a place of veneration even before the Christian era, as it was the location of a Lughnasa celebration on the last

Sunday in July, known locally as Garland Sunday – the traditional day in pagan Ireland for a festival in honour of Lug, the good god of the pre-Christian Celts. It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the parish priest in the middle of the nineteenth century banned the *patrún* or pattern day here because he felt that it – and the Round Tower – smacked of pagan practices (he was one of those who thought that Round Towers were pagan Fire Temples). The pattern took place at Tober Bannon, St. Benen's well, to the north-west of the church.

The exterior east wall of the church has a niche with the Virgin and Child on top, beneath which there is a large vault of the Browne family. To the north-east there is another, more ancient-looking, stone vault bearing an inscription of the Morris family which has been superimposed in the top right-hand corner with an IHS monogram. The remainder of the churchyard is choc-a-bloc with more modern graves and headstones.

Legends associated with Kilbennon

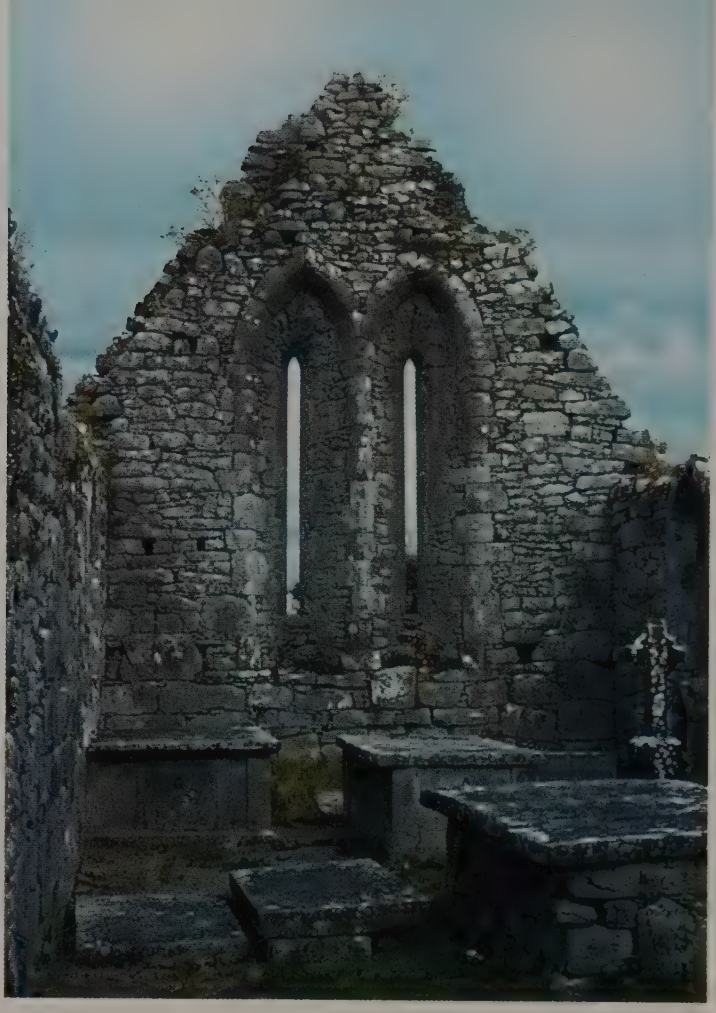
Folklore associated with the spot tells of Patrick and Benen calling forth the spring for the well by lifting the sod, and baptising and healing lepers there.

Another legend says that the well sprang up where a stone which St. Patrick gave Benen fell out of his pocket. There was, traditionally, an ash-tree at the well.

One final tale tells of Benen and his driver approaching the place in a chariot, and the driver, fearing an ambush, persuaded the unwarned saint to change places with him. When the ambushers beheaded the driver in place of the saint, a well sprang up where the driver's head had fallen to the ground.

4. Killeely

IRISH PLACE-NAMES beginning with Kil- usually incorporate the name of an early saint, but because nothing is known of the name Faoile which forms part of the name Killeely (*Cill-Fhaoile*), John O'Donovan, the great nineteenth-century *savant* of the Ordnance Survey, doubted whether the place was called after a saint at all.



Tombstones of recent centuries blend in well with the grey limestone walls of the church built at Killeely around 1200, with its large cyclopean masonry in the lower courses and a neat pair of lancet windows in the east wall.

The east/west-orientated church that runs parallel to a road east of Kilcolgan was probably originally a parish church during the later Middle Ages, which is probably why nothing is recorded of its history. The graceful and slender, slightly-pointed lancet windows in the east wall suggest a construction date early in the thirteenth century, which might go against the normal dating of its kind of massive masonry to a period well before 1200. But, if the windows are not a secondary addition, Killeely may be an important example showing the use of such large-stoned cyclopean masonry as late as the early thirteenth century in Galway and elsewhere.

Unlike Kiltiernan, this church has no *antae* – projections at the gable corners on the east and west walls – but was also built on a plinth, though

some windows are, in contrast, round-headed rather than having a triangular top, that in the north wall having a curious hole beside it, the purpose of which is unclear. The quoins at the western end of the church seem to belong to the early thirteenth century, but most of the other masonry in the western third of the church is clearly inferior, jumbled and using smaller stones, indicating that this part of the church was almost entirely rebuilt, probably in the fifteenth century. The change in masonry style is best seen in the exterior north wall of the church. The original church may have had a (flat-headed?) doorway at the western end but, in the re-build, this was entirely removed, and replaced by the present, pointed doorway, which was placed in the south wall, with some surfaces decorated with hyphenated decoration of the kind often encountered on buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Noteworthy is the 'eye-loop' inside it which acted as the pivot for the vertical hinge of a long-vanished wooden door. Dating from the same period is a cusped piscina (for pouring away Mass water) that was inserted beneath the original south window near the eastern end of the church. The interior of this eastern end of the church is a symphony in grey – the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century tombs blending in colour with the splendid masonry of the interior walls. Only a few modern memorials at the western end of the church disturb the venerable ancientness of the church interior.

5. Killursa

KILLURSA IS TWO CHURCHES in one. A small, low flat-headed doorway placed off-centre in the west wall belongs to the earlier of these, a small rectangular church, the slanting gable-walls of which can be seen incorporated into the larger and taller west wall which belongs to the second church. The smaller, older church was built of large stones, some of which are still *in situ*, but when the larger church was built, parts of the older church were presumably demolished, and some of its stones re-used in the bottom layers of the second church. The first church was built some time before 1200, the second probably in the fifteenth century, as its doorway and windows would seem to belong to that period.

Killursa, the church of St. Fursey, was built in two periods, the first comprising the part with the door seen on the left, dating from before 1200, and the second a much expanded structure (with traceried east window) which must have served as a local parish church from the fifteenth century.

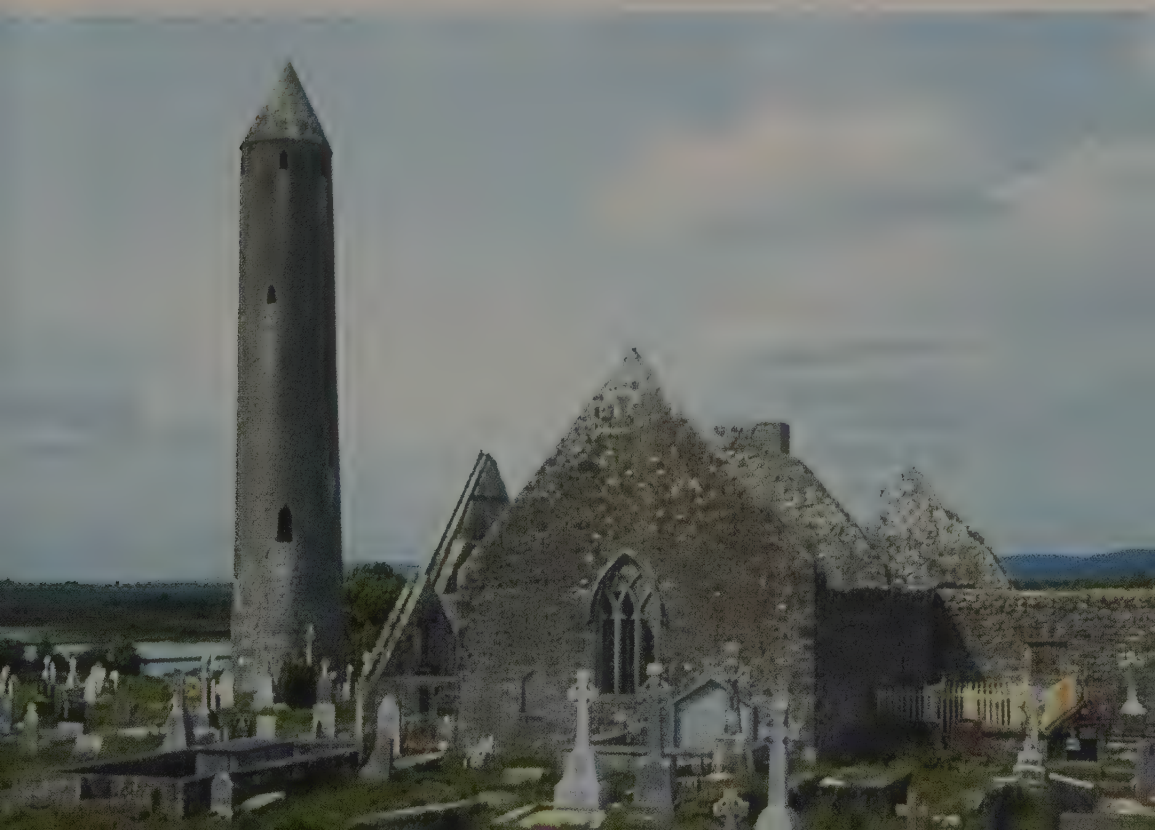
Much of its interior is taken up with small, uninscribed, rude head-stones.

Outside, in the churchyard, the most unusual memorial is a cylindrical, round-topped monument erected to commemorate a priest who died in 1767. But, at the entrance to the churchyard, is a statue to the seventh-century Saint Fursa after whom the church is called (*Cill Fhursa*, the church of Fursa), and who is traditionally thought to have been born in the locality. He left his homeland to spread the gospel, his monastic foundation at Cnoberesburgh in East Anglia earning for him renown in the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Church and People*. He later worked in north-eastern France, and became famous for visions he had had. On his death, his uncorrupted body was taken to Peronne for burial, and there became an object of veneration for countless thousands of pilgrims who flocked to his tomb – showing that perhaps this small and ruined church in east Galway could become a draw, too, for English and French tourists.

6. Kilmacduagh

'THE CHURCH OF THE SON OF DUACH' is the most impressive Early Christian site in South Galway, one of the three most significant in the County (along with Clonfert and Tuam) – and one of the least known of the big monastic settlements of early medieval Ireland. Its name comes from the saintly hermit Colmán son of Duach, who was of local royal stock and kinsman of Guaire, king of the surrounding area called Aidhne – a man renowned in Irish tradition for his hospitality (see below under Folklore). Colmán retired as a hermit to the Burren in the neighbouring county of Clare, and it was around his tomb at Kilmacduagh – marked by yew trees and appropriated in 1852 by Bishop French for his grave – that a monastery grew up. For centuries, the buildings of this monastery would have been made of wood, and no

The ancient Cathedral site of Kilmacduagh is best-known for its Round Tower which leans more than two feet out of the perpendicular. It was probably built some time after the year 1000, and certainly centuries before its more famous counterpart at Pisa.



The fifteenth-century traceried east window of Kilmacduagh Cathedral provides a view through to the chancel arch, as well as to the west wall with its late medieval window and simple ancient Irish doorway that was blocked up centuries ago.

structure surviving on the site is likely to be earlier than the second millennium (i.e. eleventh century). One of the oldest is the Round Tower – at about 112 feet, the tallest in the country – dating probably from the eleventh or twelfth century. It is built of solid ashlar masonry in its lower parts, and its doorway is higher off the ground than in any other tower of

its kind in the country. Its foundations, however, must have been somewhat insecure, as it leans two feet four inches out of the perpendicular – Ireland's predecessor to the leaning tower of Pisa!

Of much the same vintage is that part of the western end of the Cathedral which is made up of large-block cyclopean masonry. The west wall contains a fine trabeate doorway (now blocked) that is topped by a heavy lintel the whole thickness of the wall. It has projecting stone corbels at the base of the roof which once supported heavy wooden bargeboards, and which would suggest a date no earlier than the twelfth century. Its fine-quality stonework is of a kind that continued to be practised possibly into the thirteenth century in South Galway (compare Killeely). Probably around the fifteenth century, the west gable was raised, the Cathedral was extended to form a nave and chancel structure with transepts, and provided with a new decorative doorway near the western end of the south wall (note the well-carved head above the door). The south and west traceried windows are well preserved, and the north transept contains two charming Crucifixion plaques and the figure of St. Colmán, all dating from the seventeenth century.

In a field to the east of the adjoining road is the church of St. Mary (with ninth/tenth century grave slab). To the north of the Cathedral is the Bishop's House, an unique thirteenth/fourteenth-century building (recently restored) and the very ruined church of St. John.

The dedications of these two churches suggest a date unlikely to be earlier than 1200, and probably later. Both may well have been built to cater for pilgrims, as Kilmacduagh continued to be an important centre of pilgrimage throughout the later Middle Ages – with the now-lost saint's belt as one of the relics which pilgrims would have come to venerate.

The other building of note is O'Heyne's church, reachable down a laneway to the west of the main complex of buildings. As its name implies, it was founded by the O'Heyne family for the Augustinians, in whose hands it remained until 1584, long after the Dissolution of the Monasteries had taken its toll of other religious foundations in the country. The stonework of this church belongs to what is known as 'the School of the West' – a school of masons that worked on various churches west of the Shannon in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and which is characterised by superbly-fitting stonework, evidenced here in

the twin round-headed east windows, and the chancel arch. Both have good-quality carving of leaves and plants – some almost naturalistic – and one capital of the chancel arch bears two beasts biting each other, the significance of which escapes us. At some time around the fifteenth century, the north wall of the nave must have become unstable, at which stage a new one was built inside it – and provided with a pointed north doorway. This necessitated moving southwards by a few feet the north side of the chancel arch, which gives the church interior an asymmetrical look when seen from the western end. Some of the exterior corners of the church preserve engaged columns on bases – a rare feature found on some West of Ireland churches of around 1200 which, within a few decades, is likely to be the date of O'Heyne's church. To the south of the chancel are now inaccessible buildings that formed part of the claustral ranges (including a presumed Chapter House), and there may have been a lean-to cloister built up against it, which has left no traces. In what would have been the south-west corner of the cloister garth, a rather rude building was erected probably some considerable time after the cloister would have gone out of use.

Folklore

According to legend, St. Colmán's kinsman, Guaire Aidhne, was so impressed by the holy man's sanctity that he offered him a site for a monastery. The saint thanked him, but left the selection of the site to Providence. The choice was made when the saint dropped his belt during a walk through a wood and, taking this to be a sign from heaven, he decided that this should be the chosen site for his monastery. The belt survived in the hands of its hereditary keepers, the O'Shaughnessys, until at least the seventeenth century. They were intermarried with the O'Heynes, who built the church named after them, and whose coat of arms included a wasp and a horsefly, both of which used to be prevalent in the locality.

The other, and more famous, story that concerns St. Colmán relates to the famous 'Road of the Dishes' near Keelhilla in the Burren. One Eastertide, we are told, St. Colmán ran out of food in his cave hermitage and sent his servant out to find some sustenance – which he signally failed to locate. But the Lord looked after his own for, at that same

The hills of the Burren provide a scenic backdrop for St. Colmán's venerable monastery at Kilmacduagh near the southern end of the County.

moment, the saint's legendary kinsman, Guaire Aidhne, famous for his hospitality, was having a great banquet where Gort now stands. But the friends he was entertaining were amazed when the dishes rose up from the table and started heading off in one particular direction – together with whatever culinary delights they bore. Guaire ordered his men to follow the plates as they wafted through the air – until they came to Colmán's hermitage, whereupon they were surprised to find the saint and his acolyte with the plates in front of them, but not eating anything on them. Colmán said that he did not want to partake of the food until he learned from whence it came. So Guaire, who had started off the conversation by saying 'You are caught', came to recognise his cousin, and bade him eat what he had provided by the grace of God. Thereupon, he offered the spiritual care of his life to Colmán, and his body to buried in Colmán's monastery when the time should come. In addition to land, the king gave the holy man sixty cows, together with men and maid servants to complete the building.

7. Kiltartan

KILTARTAN IS A NAME that became widely known through Lady Gregory, who is commemorated in a Heritage Centre near the main Gort to Galway road, but the name goes back many centuries before her, to a saint named Tárten or Torten, about whom little or nothing is known, though the name could be a corruption of Atharacht, or Attracta, a female saint honoured at a famous well near Coolavin in County Sligo.

The medieval church bearing the name would not appear to have been monastic, and probably served as a parish church in the Middle Ages. While it may conceivably replace an older (wooden?) one on the site, this long,

The interior of the medieval parish church at Kiltartan, with an interesting canopied tomb in the wall (on the left).

rectangular church (65 x 25 feet) is unlikely to be much earlier than 1200. In conformity with a number of other South Galway churches of roughly the same period, the structure is characterised by the use of fine, large-stoned cyclopean masonry. Typical of the period around the early thirteenth century are the narrow inward-splaying windows in the north wall. But, as was sometimes the case in South Galway, the western end of the church appears to have been entirely re-built from the ground up sometime around the fifteenth century – and in masonry inferior to that of the eastern portion. Whether the church was lengthened in the process – possibly to cater for an expanding population – is difficult to know. It is likely that (as was probably also the case at Killeely) a west doorway which originally provided the entrance was replaced by a new one inserted in the north wall. At the same time, the upper portions of the north and south walls were heavily rebuilt, including a triple-cusped east window, but also with the insertion of some of the narrow windows of the old church in the side-walls. A notable feature is the seemingly late-medieval simple arched tomb-niche with cusped (but otherwise undecorated) frontal. The interior of the church is covered with modern grave memorials which are in bad need of care and attention, but the roots of ivy engulfing the walls have recently been severed.

Folklore

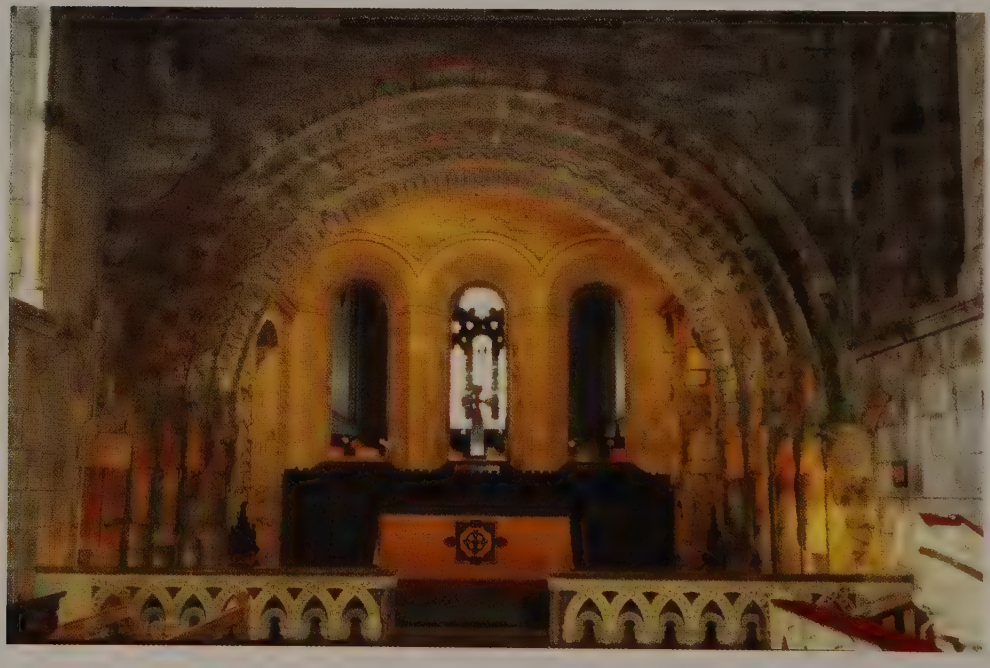
Outside the church was a stone which is said to have been tied around the neck of the mother of St. Colmán mac Duagh when she was thrown into a hole to drown her. But when she said "God help us", the hole henceforth became known as Poll Dia Linn.

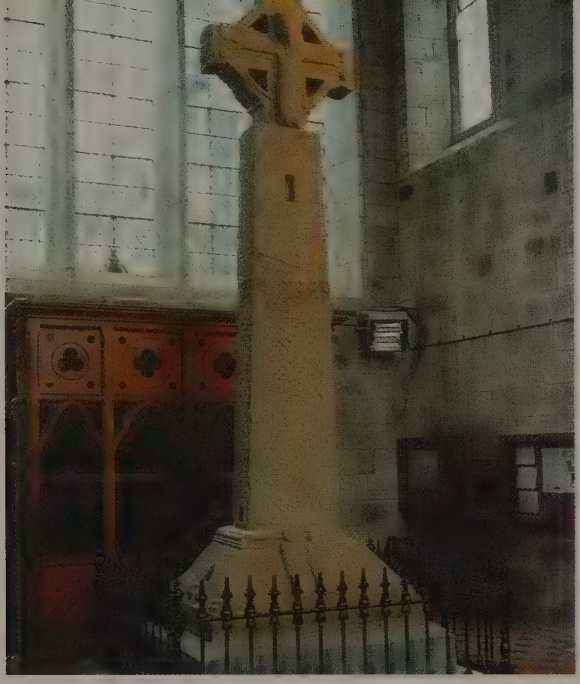
◀ A modern crucifix occupies the niche of a fifteenth-century canopied tomb in the church at Kiltartan. The undecorated arches above ground level may once have been painted.

8. Tuam: St. Mary's Church of Ireland Cathedral

TUAM, THE SITE of a monastery founded by St. Jarlath in the sixth century and seat of the O'Conor High Kings of Ireland in the twelfth, became the centre of a new diocese in 1111, and was raised to the status of archdiocese in 1152. The present Church of Ireland Cathedral must have had at least one predecessor, which collapsed in 1184, and it is reasonable to presume that the earliest part of the present Cathedral was built shortly after that. This is what was then and is now again the chancel of the Cathedral, a square area entered beneath an arch and with three

The Church of Ireland Cathedral in Tuam preserves parts of a late twelfth-century church with highly-decorative carving in sandstone, including the chancel arch which is the broadest of its kind surviving in Ireland.





Tuam possesses parts of four separate twelfth-century High Crosses, two of which are seen here mounted one on top of the other in the north transept of the Church of Ireland Cathedral. Both may have been commissioned by the great Turlough O Conor, who made Tuam the base for his High Kingship of Ireland in 1119.

windows in the east wall. The arch is one of the great glories of Irish Romanesque architecture, its span of about 18 feet being the largest of its kind known in the country. In five orders, it is richly decorated with a great variety of ornament, and its capitals have some superbly-carved stylised human faces, which were partially damaged in a fire of 1787. The three east windows are equally well carved in low false relief with animal ornament of ultimately Viking origin, and with a small Temptation scene which has never been satisfactorily explained. Not having been exposed to the elements, the carving on the windows has kept its pristine crispness.

In the later Middle Ages, a much more extensive chancel was built immediately to the east. Though ascribed by some to William de Bermingham, archbishop from 1289 to 1312, on the basis of historical references, it may, however, be up to a century later in date. It is a long rectangle in shape with triple (partially restored) windows in the north and south walls that alternate with external buttresses, and having an extensive five-light window (now with modern glass) in the east wall. The nave which was presumably intended to accompany it was never built, which is as well, as it would have entailed the destruction of the Romanesque chancel. Thus, from the time of its construction until the second half of the nineteenth century, this structure served as the main area of worship in the Cathedral. Access to it was through the

Romanesque chancel which then served as a porch, and entrance from it to the chancel was created by knocking out the lower part of the central window in the east wall. Where the two chancels, old and new, met, a tower was constructed which was repaired in 1688 but was demolished when the third and final stage of building the Cathedral was reached in the 1860s.

It was then that Sir Thomas Deane, one of the most prominent architects of the period, was commissioned to design a new Cathedral in the neo-Gothic style, but with instructions to leave the existing Romanesque and Gothic chancels intact. What he constructed was a new nave (doubtless much larger than the old Romanesque one had been), with west doorway, side aisles, a north and south transept and an impressive tower with spire at the crossing. The construction period lasted until 1878, and Tuam now had the largest Church of Ireland Cathedral in Connacht, a consolation to make up for the loss of archiepiscopal status which it had suffered almost forty years before. Deane's only alteration to the Romanesque chancel was to repair the damage done to the central east window, and blocking up the late medieval doorway in a way that makes it almost seem as if it were never there. The altar was now back beneath the east window, and to link the chancel to the crossing, he built a choir, where red sandstone was chosen for the inner walls to blend in with that of the Romanesque arch. In fact, Deane used sandstone widely throughout the building, leaving a gap between it and the outer limestone shell to prevent damp – but to no avail, as the Cathedral still suffers from the rain.

The entrance is now usually through the north transept door, rather than through Deane's west doorway, which is normally kept locked. The late medieval chancel, having acted as chapter house (with eighteenth-century Piedmontese choir stalls now returned to Italy), library and synod hall, is now suitably restored as a community centre / display area. The ecclesiastical furniture is not of major interest, the bishop's throne and chapter stalls detracting, if anything, from the interior appearance, and the largely late-nineteenth-century stained glass erected to various Victorian worthies is more notable for the flowing moustaches of its male figures than for any particular artistic interest.

JM Synge's grandfather is buried in the graveyard.

Medieval Sites

9. Abbey (Kilnaleghin)

ABBEY, BETWEEN PORTUMNA and the eastern foot of the Slieve Aughty hills, is the site of the only Carthusian house in Ireland, though not a trace of it remains. This was a foundation independent of the seventh-century Irish saint Feichín, whose cult is still practised in the locality. The original name of the Carthusian monastery was Kilnaleghin, and the charterhouse was founded around 1252 by John de Cogan, who probably introduced the Carthusian monks from Somerset – and who was probably also responsible for founding the Franciscan house at Claregalway.

The priory is said to have been destroyed in 1279, but was probably soon rebuilt – perhaps in wood, which would help to explain why no traces

The larger south side-chapels at Abbey (Kilnaleghin) have been cleverly restored, re-using older stones in the Gothic windows, and a well-carved head above one of them.

of the Carthusian monastery survive. It is also said that the Priory was sold to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in 1306 but, while the Knights continued to hold the tithes and rectory right up to the Reformation, the actual sale of the monastery to them was apparently never completed. In 1321, the English Carthusian priors decided to send no more monks to Kilnaleghin because they could no longer get any rents from the Irish house, which would seem to have been finally abandoned some twenty years later. Certainly, by 1371, after the Carthusian cells had remained deserted for thirty years, it was proposed that the site should be granted to the Franciscans, for whom the de Burgos then founded a monastery. In 1400, Pope Boniface IX granted an indulgence to penitents visiting the house and giving alms for its conservation and repair – and many of the surviving buildings would fit in well with a fifteenth-century date.

The church would have been a long hall-type structure, but with an additional south aisle linked to it by an arcade supported on angular columns. It resembled Meelick in this, but also in having two side chapels to the south. Careful inspection shows both to have windows restored in modern times, that in the eastern side-chapel at Abbey ingeniously so, and that in its more westerly counterpart making clever, if wrong, use of old tracery in its upper part which is surmounted by a stone head. A small building was later inserted between these two side-chapels, necessitating the blocking up of a window in the west wall of the east chapel.

The buildings were devastated after the Suppression of the Monasteries around 1540, but Richard de Burgo, Earl of Clanrickarde, bought the buildings from Queen Elizabeth and repaired the dormitories and other parts of the old monastery. It may have been he who built in the fine first-floor fire-place in the western wall of the otherwise poorly-preserved domestic quarters, together with the diamond-shaped chimneys typical of the late sixteenth century or the period around 1600. A sixteenth-century tombstone survives near the south-western corner of the old cloister garth.

The friars held a chapter in a neighbouring wood in 1609, and seem to have returned to the friary in 1615 to occupy and restore it. Sometime before that, the Dowager Countess of Clanrickarde had roofed the church, but her pious work does not appear to have survived the Cromwellian period, when the friars had to abandon their house again,

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only to return once more after the restoration of Charles II in 1660. When the friars finally abandoned the monastery is not recorded, but it was probably before the end of the eighteenth century. Certainly, three eighteenth-century chalices have managed to survive from Kilnaleghin, and a fifteenth-century chasuble now in the Museum in Loughrea may have also come from here.

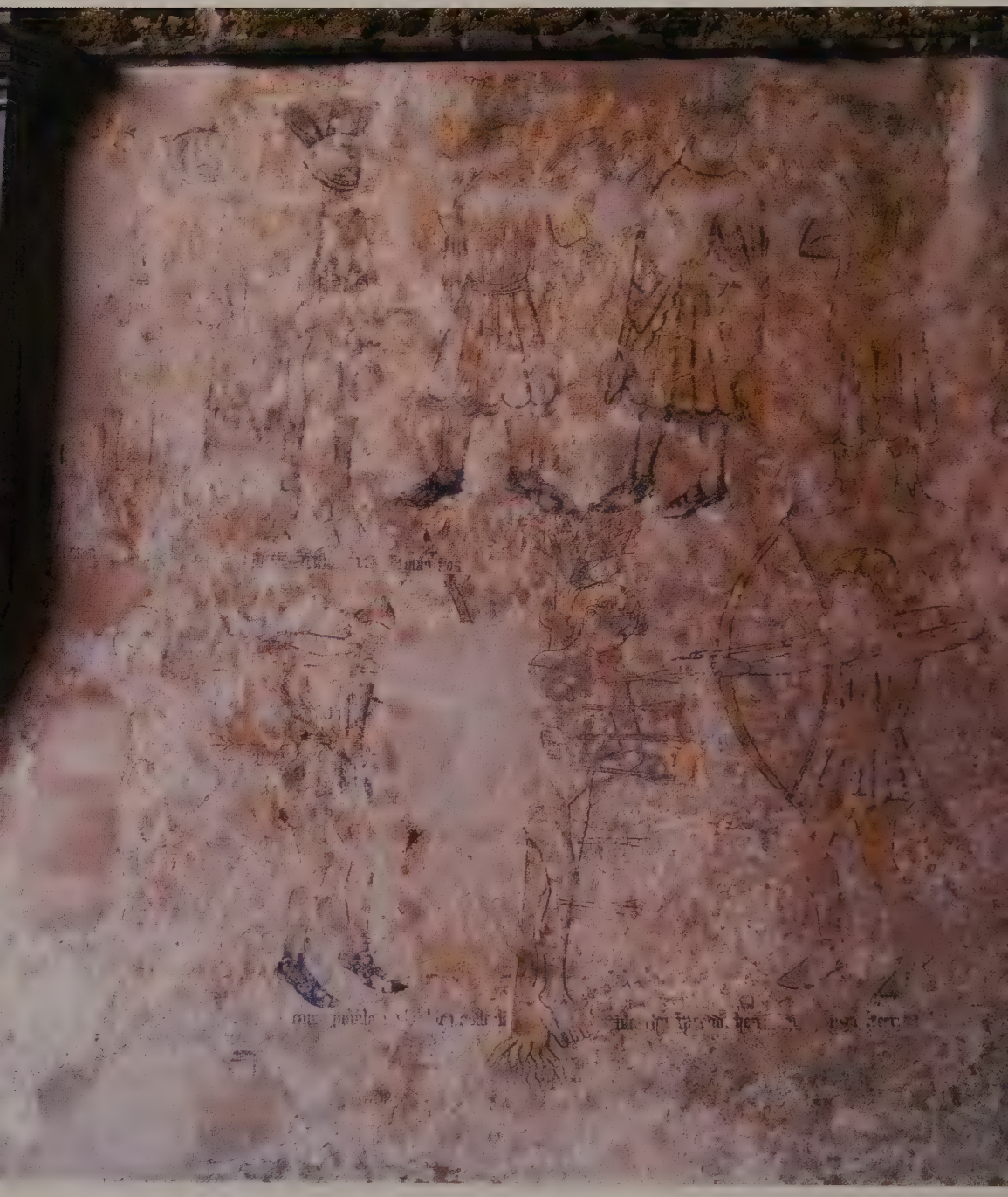
The noted Franciscan Micheál O'Cleirigh, one of the famous Four Masters, copied out here a life of St. Ceallach from the manuscript known as the *Leabhar Breac*, which the MacEgans of Duniry nearby may have loaned temporarily to the monastery, and this laudable act is recorded in a carving in Loughrea Cathedral as one of the important events in the history of the diocese. Frank Burke's book on *The Abbey of Kilnalahan* records that another event similarly commemorated in stone in the same Cathedral was the consecration of John de Burgo as bishop of Clonfert at Kinaleghin in 1642. It may also be noted in passing that the modern Catholic church in the village of Abbey nearby has stained glass windows which neatly sum up the history of Christianity in the area – the figure of St. Feichín, and the arms of the Carthusians, the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem and the Franciscans.

One of the most interesting aspects of visiting Abbey is viewing the collection of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century tombstones in the two side-chapels. The roof over the eastern chapel, perhaps part of the rebuilding recorded in a plaque as having been undertaken in 1741 by Edward Burke of Meelick, has helped to preserve for posterity a number of Burke tombs. The largest, but not the most attractive, of these is that occupying much of the centre of the chapel and which was erected to commemorate the family of Sir John Burke of Marble Hill, who died in 1847. Of more artistic merit is that of Thomas de Burgo of Pallas, dating from 1649, with its two-tiered classical design and mason's initials. Also classical in inspiration is the monument to John Burke of Reaghan erected against the south wall of the western side-chapel in 1745. The quality difference between the eighteenth-century hand-carved tomb inscriptions and those executed by template in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be seen by comparing headstones of different types in the churchyard. A walled enclosure near the road houses a family vault of the Nugent family.

10. Abbeyknockmoy

KNOCKMOY ABBEY is the only Cistercian house in our chosen area, but one of the most important of East Galway's ecclesiastical monuments. It had royal origins, having been founded from Boyle in 1190 by Cathal Crobhderg O'Conor, king of Connacht, who ordered that he be buried there in the habit of a monk upon his death, which occurred in 1224. In doing so, he set a trend for many of his descendants who were also interred there, though not as monks. During the controversy surrounding the Conspiracy of Mellifont in 1228, Knockmoy became affiliated to the famous French abbey of Clairvaux, where both St. Malachy of Armagh and the great Cistercian preacher, St. Bernard, are buried side by side in front of the high altar. But Knockmoy was disgraced twelve years later when the abbot allowed his hair to be washed by a woman! By the early fifteenth century, Knockmoy had become so poverty-stricken that its monks could not be maintained properly, though things can't have been too bad, and must have been worth fighting for, because we know that, in the second half of the century, squabbles broke out as to who should become abbot of the community. The Abbey was suppressed at the Reformation when Hugh O'Kelly (apparently a layman) acknowledged the supremacy of king Henry VIII, and promised men and arms in return for a life grant of the property which, some forty years later, is known to have included 1260 acres of land – and Clare Island off the Mayo coast.

The Abbey buildings conform to the typical Cistercian lay-out – a church on one side of a cloister garth with lean-to cloister, the other three sides being formed by chapter-house, refectory and kitchen, and stores and dormitories. The somewhat severe nave, with pointed side-aisles, survives only in part, though it has some interesting carvings, particularly on one of the supports of the south aisle arcade. Each of the transepts has two side-chapels with some foliate capitals, but the main interest of the abbey lies in the chancel, which is locked. It is vaulted with undecorated stone ribs, but the pointed arch at the crossing has recently been rebuilt. The east wall has a set of three windows, joined on the outside by a string course typical of a western Irish school of masons active mainly in



Connacht during the first quarter of the thirteenth century. It was they who carved the attractive decoration on the exterior arches above the string-course level.

The take-over of the monastery by the O'Kellys of Uí Maine is illustrated by a large canopied tomb in the north wall of the chancel that was inserted as a memorial to Malachy O'Kelly, who died in 1401, and his wife Fionnuala, whose death is recorded two years later. The most unusual feature, however, is the late Gothic painting of c. 1500 beside it, depicting a *Crucifixion*, *St. Sebastian* and a representation of the tale of *The Three Live Kings* and *The Three Dead Kings*, accompanied by a now no-longer entirely legible Gothic, so-called 'black letter,' inscription to the effect that 'as you are now, so once we were; as we now are, so shall you be'. Time has not dealt kindly with the colours, which have suffered greatly, though the black outlines have been largely preserved. The choir also preserves some nineteenth-century and earlier memorials, and the tower (or what remains of it) was probably inserted in the fifteenth century.

The east range of the claustral buildings still survives, having been built – like the church – in the decades between 1210 and 1230. The five lancet windows of the chapter house were finely decorated inside with heavily-undercut chevron ornament, but the whole interior space was ruined by the insertion of an internal wall in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The remainder of the buildings around the cloister garth survive partially up to first floor level, but have no further features of particular interest. Portions of the 'Dumb-bell'-style piers of the fifteenth-century cloister arcade were uncovered during excavations in the 1980s, but are not on public display, though the visible wall-foundations give an adequate idea of the extent and layout of the cloister.

One final point may be mentioned. Abbeyknockmoy can lay claim to having had a professional scribe within its walls – Diarmuid O'Culechain, who is known to have written a missal for the abbey – one of only two such scribes known in the records of the Irish Cistercian houses though, sadly, none of his products can be identified today.

◀ The recently-restored wall-painting of c. 1500 on the north wall of the chancel of Knockmoy Abbey depicts the *Three Live Kings* and the *Three Dead Kings* in the upper register, and *The martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* beneath.

11. Annaghdown

ST. BRENDAN IS THE ONE SAINT who spans the whole geographical arc of our chosen area. He is said to have been buried in Clonfert on the eastern edge beside the Shannon's shores, but died at Annaghdown in 577 or 583 on the western fringe beside the waters of Lough Corrib. It was at the latter place that he had founded a convent of nuns for his sister Briga. But Annaghdown was much more than just a convent. It was a Cathedral and seat of a bishop from the twelfth until at least the fourteenth century, when the diocese was amalga-

An aerial view of Annaghdown shows its rich collection of churches, two in the bottom centre of the picture, the Cathedral near the left and the Augustinian priory close to the lakeshore at the top.

▲

A detail of the bottom of the window in Annaghdown Cathedral (seen in full on the right), showing a beast emerging from a moulding that is flanked by zig-zag chevron ornament bearing floral motifs, showing the high standard of architectural sculpture in East Galway in the period around 1200.

The Romanesque window of *c.*1200 in the east wall of the Cathedral at Annaghdown is one of the most profusely decorated of its kind anywhere in Ireland.

mated with Tuam. It also had separate monasteries for the Augustinian and Premonstratensian canons and, in the sixteenth century, it is known to have had a secular college secretly run by four priests or vicars.

Little is known about the early history of the convent. We can only presume that its existence continued for centuries until it was subsumed by the Arroasian Canonesses of Clonard, in County Meath, during the course of the twelfth century, but when the Canonesses got a new head house for Connacht at Kilcreevanty around 1223, the Annaghdown nuns may have moved to the island of Inishmaine on Lough Mask. It was probably at that stage that the vacuum was filled by the arrival of the Premonstratensians, whose foundation had almost certainly become the

Abbey of St. John the Baptist by 1236, bearing the name *Cella Parva* ('poor cell'), and continued – not without a number of disputes – until it was suppressed during the reign of king Henry VIII in the 1540s. The northernmost of the three clusters of buildings at Annaghdown has one long church which may well have been that of the Premonstratensians. One smaller building close to it, still displaying elements of cyclopean masonry, though reduced to little more than its foundations, could conceivably have belonged to the nunnery which preceded them. The long church itself is a nave-and-chancel structure with remains of a chancel arch, but few other features of interest remain other than a pointed doorway in the north wall.

The second building focus is the Cathedral, located further down the slope. This is a tall rectangular building with Gothic north doorway, with capitals resembling the carving on Kilfenora cathedral of c.1200, and with broad south windows inserted when the Church of Ireland restored the church for divine worship in 1798 at a cost of £461-10-9. The present east window may have been inserted at this time. It has the same dimensions as a gap that exists where an east window ought to be in the priory by the lakeshore, and this has given rise to the oft-expressed view that the Cathedral window was taken from the priory – which is certainly a possibility. But, because masons have rarely succeeded in correctly re-assembling Romanesque doorways or windows centuries after they were originally carved, the comparatively good fit of the Annaghdown Cathedral window stones could negate the suggestion, and argue in favour of the window being in its original position, for although its style may differ from that of the north doorway just mentioned, the two need not be very far apart in date.

Whether in its original position or not, the window is undoubtedly the finest late Romanesque-style window to survive in Ireland from the period around 1200, and one of the greatest masterpieces of sculpture in Connacht before it was overcome by the Normans in 1235. Its decoration consists of a central roll with pointed bowtell moulding, which starts at the bottom and continues without interruption around the arched top and down the other side, with the base of the north side ending in a splendid monster with contorted neck, found also on a window at Rath in central Clare, where the same mason would also appear to have been at work.

The roll is approached from each side all the way round by triangles with pellet ornament and carved with stylised foliage and animals, in very subtle low relief. All of this is, in turn, framed by a raised moulding with foliate block capitals, above which is a kind of pyramidal decoration.

The final group of ecclesiastical buildings is down near the lakeshore – the priory of the Augustinian canons, known as St. Mary *de Portu Patrum*, which may have been founded by Turlough O'Conor at the instance of the reformer St. Malachy some time in the 1140s. It is possible that its church may have been used also by the Canonesses of the same order. Like the Premonstratensian foundation, it was not without its contentious claims and counter-claims inside and outside the community and, like it, was closed down at the Reformation. Thereafter, it came into the hands of Richard, Earl of Clanrickarde, in 1562, and a lease in reversion was granted to the warden and vicars of King's College, Galway, in 1578. The buildings consist of a church, with a cloister attached, that still has some of its domestic buildings surrounding it. The cloister was of the lean-to variety, and the stone finish of some of the windows suggests a thirteenth-century date at least for some of the buildings. The only interesting feature in the church is the south window of the choir, which has decoration in the Transitional style of around 1200.

But, of finer quality are the twelfth-century Romanesque-decorated fragments and face-mask capitals that are now assembled together near the south-western end of the domestic buildings. Together, these may have formed part of a chancel arch of an earlier church on the site and – like the east window in the Cathedral – show the high quality of stone carving in the area in the decades on either side of the year 1200.

One building no longer extant at Annaghdown is the Round Tower known to have been built in 1238 – the last of its kind to have been erected in Ireland.

While the surviving buildings at Annaghdown are diffuse, the stone-carved architectural sculpture, the association with St. Brendan – and the lakeside location – make this one of the most attractive sites in the whole area covered by this survey.

12. Athenry Dominican Friary

More than a third of the Irish medieval friaries of the Dominicans were located in Connacht and, of the five in Galway, that at Athenry was one of the most richly endowed – and is still one of the best preserved (though see also Portumna). The priory of SS. Peter and Paul at Athenry was founded in 1241 by Milo de Bermingham, who provided land and money for the building of the church where he was buried in 1252. Many of his descendants chose to be interred there also, as did several bishops of Clonfert and Kilmacduagh. The founder's son, William, who was archbishop of Tuam from 1289 until 1312, was interred in a splendid tomb in the friary, but there is no

An anonymous copy of a drawing by Angelo Maria Bigari, now in the Royal Irish Academy (Ms.3.C.29, p. 34), shows that the Dominican Priory in Athenry looked more impressive before its tall tower collapsed not long after the original watercolour was painted in 1779.

inscription to indicate which of the surviving tombs may have been his. The church was re-edified in 1327-45, and restored after a fire sometime around 1420. It may have been at that stage of its development that the tower was inserted, thereby adding an air of elevated distinction to the buildings, but it collapsed sometime after 1779.

The church consists of nave, choir, north aisle and transepts, built over a period of some two centuries – together with a sacristy of later date. Of Milo de Bermingham's original church all that survives are the south wall of the nave and good parts of the north and south walls of the choir, where the tall, thin lancet windows are typical thirteenth-century features. The eastern end of the church must have been in need of repair by the following century, and its two eastern corners were heavily re-built with the addition of stout buttresses in the re-edifications executed in the period 1327-45. At the same time, the church was extended northwards to include a new transept and adjoining aisle (through which entrance is currently gained), although the existing pillars supporting the aisle arcade are a re-build of the fifteenth century. Probably fourteenth-century in date are the fine series of niches, grouped in threes, beneath the fine north window of the transept, which were sadly vandalised some decades ago and re-built partially in stone, but also in part replaced by unsightly re-enforced concrete. H.G. Leask attributes the cusped windows of these additions to the fourteenth century, while the surviving west window would seem to belong to the following century. It was probably after the fire of around 1420 that the original east window was dismantled, except for its outer case, and replaced by one with switch-line tracery, which has some fine heads carved on the exterior.

The church, of course, did not stand alone, and was accompanied by domestic claustral buildings to the south of the nave. Unusually, we know the names associated with the building of certain parts of them – Phelim O'Conor the refectory, Eugene O'Heyne the dormitory and Cornelius O'Kelly the chapter house – all useful patrons to have had, each contributing a portion as donors of stained glass windows do in churches of our own day. However, of these domestic buildings, sadly nothing remains.

The friary is distinguished by its collection of medieval tombs, many trodden upon unnoticed on the ground. But those in the walls are worthy

A delicate arcade supports an imposing window which must have let in wondrous light into the north transept of Athenry Dominican Priory when first erected during the fourteenth century.

of inspection, including some on the south wall of the nave dating from the thirteenth century (there is also a support with a finely-carved fifteenth-century angel among them). In the north wall of the church there is also a fine tomb with a carved mitred head (resembling another on the outside wall) and, closer to the east wall, there is a further tomb in the western style with a cusped upper canopy, and a lower part consisting of five cusped niches (without inscription) – and decorated with a *Virgin and child* arched over by bodies of slender animals. In the south-eastern corner of the choir is the massive and intrusive limestone vault of the de Burgh family, earls of Clanrickarde, but – while equally intrusive – much more attractive is the tall monument in the choir erected to the memory of the Rt. Hon. Matilda Bermingham, who died in 1788. It is decorated in fine classical style with London Coade stone, dated 1790, and is surmounted by an urn bearing in relief a likeness of the deceased. It was, sadly, vandalised in late 2002.

An interesting stone of 1631 is placed up against the wall not far from the entrance. Finally it may be mentioned that – as recorded on a stone near the churchyard gate – Mass was celebrated again in the friary in 1991 – 750 years after its foundation, and some 450 years after the foundation was closed at the time of the Reformation.

13. Ballynakill Abbey

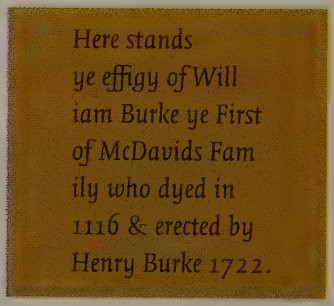
BALLYNAKILL 'ABBEY', about half a mile from Glinsk Castle, is a rather ruined structure. A century ago, H.T. Knox remarked on two windows in the east wall (now vanished) which suggested to him that the east/west-orientated hall-like church, 71 x 20 feet in extent, dated to around the thirteenth century. Around the fifteenth century, a (chantry?) chapel was added to the south, near the eastern end of the church, without the walls bonding into each other. The original floor level must have been considerably lower, as the doorway joining the two is unusually low, as is also the fine and well-preserved flamboyant window in the south wall. Note on the exterior of this window the foliage which emerges from the hood-mouldings, bitten on the east side by a human head.

The chapel underwent considerable changes in the early 1720s, as is seen by the broad windows in the east wall but more particularly in the monuments it contains – the creation of the largest of which has blocked

An early seventeenth-century Crucifixion plaque was built into the pediment of a memorial about a century later in a blocked up window the church of Ballynakill.

the interior of the south window. This monument was erected to the memory of John Burke, a most noble and illustrious man who, according to the inscription, died in 1721 at the age of 63, mourned by his widow Joanna Dillon. His are presumably the coat of arms that are placed above the long Latin paean of praise that honors him, and this classical monument is capped by flutings that enclose an attractive Crucifixion plaque that was almost a century old when it was inserted and had its two top corners clipped to have it fit in.

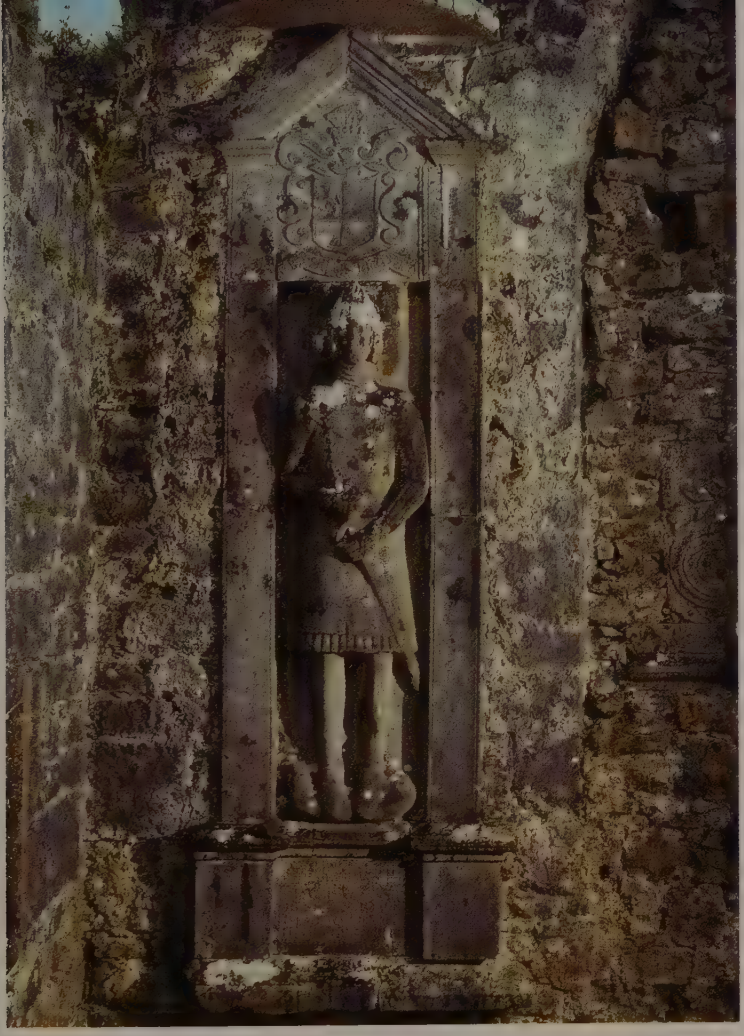
To the left of it is the most important monument in the whole building – the effigy of a knight in armour which was taken from its former recumbent location (probably within the chapel) and placed up against the wall, in surrounds which were not originally made for it, but were assembled for the purpose in 1722. The inscription beneath it, in attractive English script, states that



The date of death is manifestly wrong, as is the identification of the effigy, because the panoply of the knight prompted the armour expert John Hunt to ascribe the figure to the early sixteenth century. Its importance lies in the fact that it is one of only two medieval effigies known to survive in Connacht, this one showing the knight in a coat of mail.

Underneath his coat of mail, the knight wore a skirt over a padded garment, and on his head he wears a pointed bascinet over a leathern cap, his neck protected by a pisane of mail. Hanging from his belt is a sword with a peculiarly Irish form of pommel. His feet rest on a dog.

The family tradition, as recorded by Knox in 1902, was that the effigy represented William de Burgo, founder of the Augustinian Abbey of Athassel in 1205, and that it was sent to MacDavid as the head of the senior line of all the Burkes after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540. The



The effigy of a sixteenth-century Burke (?) knight was given a special niche in the wall of the church at Ballinakill in 1722. It is one of only two medieval knightly effigies west of the Shannon, this one wearing a coat of mail that may have been a family heirloom.

local tradition, as recorded by John O'Donovan in 1838 and much more romantic, has it that William was killed in a battle in France, where he had been loved by a lady who commissioned the effigy in his memory, and whose descendant sent it to Harry Burke as a 'striking likeness of the warrior'. Both stories may echo a tradition that the effigy came from elsewhere, which would help to explain why it is the only example of a knight in armour to survive anywhere in Connacht from the medieval period, but which still does not in any way to help to elucidate whose effigy it was.

The Ballynakill Madonna and Child

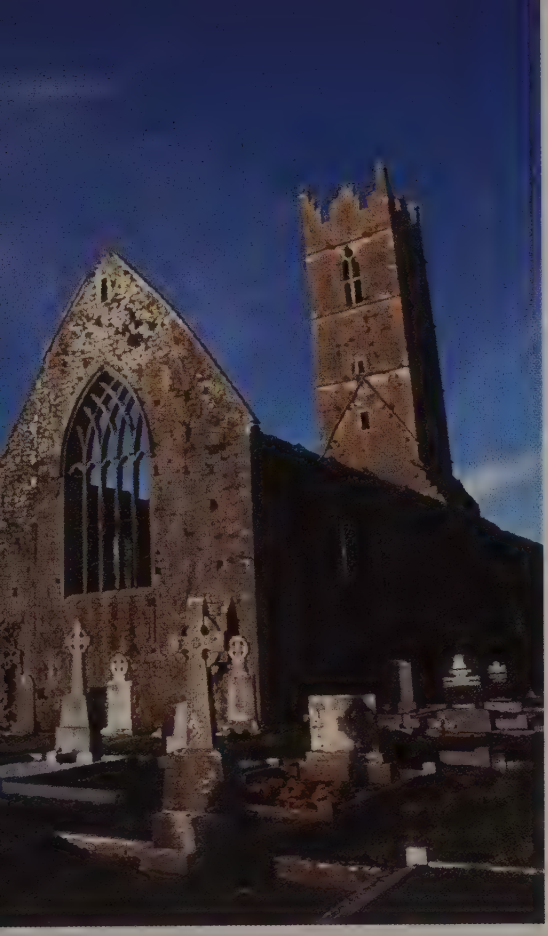
According to a local booklet *History in Glinsk*, a stone sculpture of the *Madonna and Child* was discovered on the site of Ballinakill Abbey in 1998. Experts have viewed the sculpture and believe that it dates back to 1500AD. While images of the Madonna and Child are found throughout the world both on stone and in canvas, this presentation of the child Jesus in a standing pose is believed to be unique. The sculpture now adorns the porch of the present Catholic Church in Glinsk.

14. Claregalway

CLAREGALWAY IS UNDOUBTEDLY one of the best examples of what an *early* Franciscan friary church looked like in Ireland, as the house was founded around 1252, only a quarter of a century after the death of St. Francis himself – the Norman John de Cogan I having probably been the founder. Much of the surviving church dates from the thirteenth century, with its serried rows of lancet windows in each side-wall of the choir.

The original east window of the church was a cluster of five (or perhaps even seven) tall, lancet windows, but these were removed in the fifteenth century and replaced by a five-light window with more glass and less wall, which allowed more light into the friars' choir. Inserted into the south wall of the choir, under the first and second lancets from the east, was a triple sedilia which, to judge by the dog-tooth moulding on one of the capitals, can scarcely be more than half a century later than the construction of the original church. Opposite it, in the north wall, is a fine thirteenth- or fourteenth-century tomb-niche having cusped tracery with a male and female head as label-stops. Adjoining it to the west is a monument carved with a chalice and erected to the memory of two Franciscans, Gildas Bruodar and Loughlen Quealy, in 1676.

The tombstones laid flat in the choir include some wedge-shaped examples going back to the period not long after the foundation, while in the nave are much later recumbent memorials which are unique in giving us representations of ploughs used by the farmers they commemorate.



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The thirteenth-century Franciscan church at Claregalway, with its fifteenth-century east window and tall tower, gives an inspiring vertical axis to the East Galway skyline.

A sideways glimpse of the nave of Claregalway friary offers an interesting study of graceful arch forms.

The late Caoimhín Ó Danachair pointed out that these were rather old-fashioned ploughs of the kind used in Ireland before the introduction of the Scottish swing-plough.

The original church did not have a tower, and that which now makes such an impression on the passing traveller was an insertion of the fifteenth century – as in so many other Irish Franciscan houses of the period – but so much better preserved than most. The arched lower part has lierne vaulting, the keystone of which is carved with a lively ape-like

head. The bottom part of the consoles supporting the arches bear small animal heads and other motifs. Protruding from the tower's western side, and somewhat above eye-level, are wall-brackets on which statues of saints would originally have been placed. The upper levels of the tower are defined by three horizontal string-courses, of which the topmost one has gargoyles acting as water-spouts, and the top is battlemented.

The nave had a northern side-aisle joined to it through an arcade of graceful arches resting on round drum-pillars with simply-moulded capitals. Next to the north-western corner of the tower, a very much smaller arcade has been reconstructed, the original purpose and placing of which is unclear. At roughly the same time that the tower was inserted, what was probably a chapel-cum-sacristy was added at its northern foot. In the tower wall is a piscina for pouring away the unused wine and water of the Mass, together with an eighteenth-century Franciscan inscription saying, in so many words: "as you now are, so were we; and you will be as we now are".

To the south of the nave is an extensive cloister-garth which is now a grassy void, but which corner arches show to have had a cloister leaning up against what were once two-storeyed domestic buildings. Fragments of the cloister which are preserved in the adjoining buildings show that it was supported by pillars of the so-called dumb-bell variety, so typical of the fifteenth century. The domestic buildings include at least one chimney mantelpiece, now without its original lintel – but this belonged to the period after the friary had been closed at the time of the Reformation.

Though only snippets of information are recorded of the history of the Franciscan friary after its foundation, but before its suppression under king Henry VIII, the Franciscans nevertheless remained active throughout the intervening three centuries. We do know that Philip le Blound, archdeacon of Tuam, was indicted for removing the pontificalia of the bishop of Annaghdown from the friary, but no explanation is forthcoming as to why they should have been in Claregalway in the first place.

Claregalway was one of those Franciscan houses which was strongly Irish in the make-up of its community – in contrast to many others which saw themselves as Anglo-Irish – and this is shown in the report of a papal commission of 1324 which described the loyalty of Claregalway as 'suspect', and it was one of only two houses (the other being Galway)

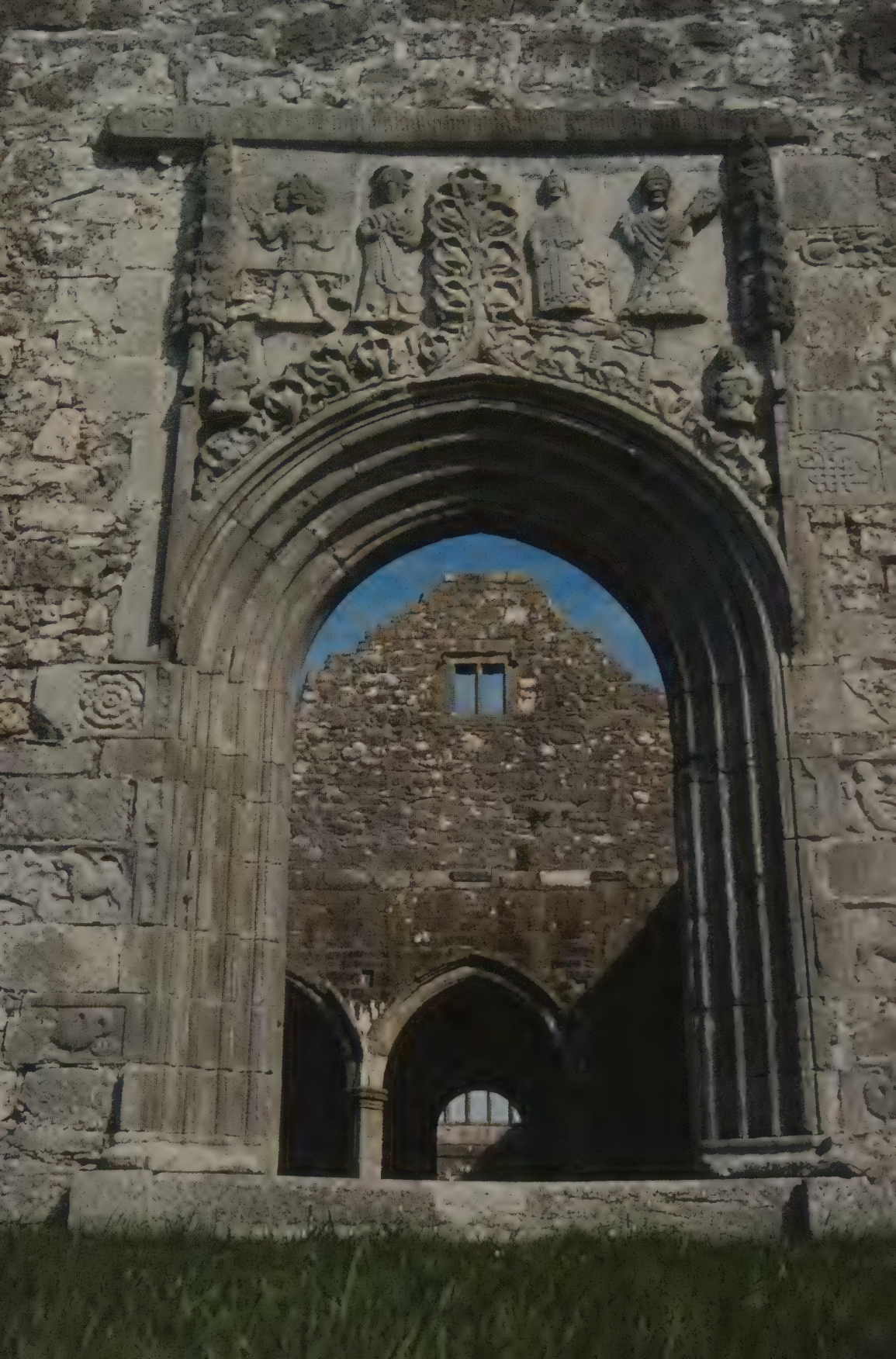
which was allowed to have a Gaelic friar appointed as guardian in charge. The report of the same commission gives the impression that Claregalway was also one of the Franciscans' houses of study in Ireland. One of the community was granted a dispensation just over a century later for having wounded a layman in a game, which subsequently led to his demise. Could it have been hurling they were playing?

By the late sixteenth century, the friars' possessions were six cottages and gardens, 24 arable acres, pasture for a like number of cows, and a water-mill, all of which were probably handed over to Richard de Burgo in 1570. He, however, allowed the friars to remain in the vicinity, which they did, until they were driven away by Sir Richard Bingham, Queen Elizabeth I's Governor of Connacht, who converted the buildings into a barracks – probably around 1589 – which was probably when the fireplace mentioned above was inserted. The friars were subsequently allowed to use the buildings before being ejected for a second time. They tried to restore the monastery after 1641, the two friars Bruodar and Quealy mentioned above doubtless having helped in the process, and the inscription in the sacristy/chapel beside the tower referred to above shows that the Franciscans were in occupation again until at least the eighteenth century, but when they departed for the last time is not recorded.

15. Clontuskert

CLONTUSKERT IS SAID to be the site of an early Christian monastery associated with St. Baetan (Boedan), who died in 809, but no trace of it survives. All that is visible today formed part of a house of the Augustinian canons, founded by the O'Kellys some time after 1140, and which consisted of a long church with undifferentiated nave and chancel, and domestic buildings to the south. The chancel is the main survivor of that church – with its original lancet windows still intact in the south wall, although the inner and outer walls of the eastern range of domestic buildings also belong to this early period of Augustinian occupation.

For 200-250 years, there was little of any moment that happened to disturb the peaceful routine of the monastery, and it is not until the late



fourteenth century that snippets of its history are recorded again, often concerning unfortunate incidents, such as the prior being removed by the bishop, whose successor was to tax it unlawfully in the fifteenth century. An O'Kelly prior fell in battle in 1444, and another was accused of killing a layman after one of the canons had received papal absolution for a similar crime. The O'Kellys, in fact, had virtually become hereditary priors during the sixteenth century. The Pope had taken the prior under his protection in 1443 and, three decades earlier, a papal indulgence had been granted for the rebuilding of the church which had been burned down in 1404 along with its 'books and jewels, ecclesiastical ornaments and other precious things'. This was the catalyst for the construction of most of the remaining part of the buildings that we see today – the nave, rood-screen, west doorway, the cloister and most of the rest of the domestic buildings surrounding it that do not belong to the earlier period. The north transept was an addition of the sixteenth century, while the cross wall erected in 1637 reduced the church to the size of the chancel to serve a smaller community of canons who had returned to inhabit the place just less than a century after the priory had been suppressed at the Reformation.

Clontuskert is one of the most decorative late medieval priories of Ireland, its ornamental features giving no inkling of the occasional unhappy incidents that had bedevilled this Augustinian foundation in the fifteenth century. Its sculptural pride and glory is the west doorway which, along with the north doorway of the Cathedral at Clonmacnoise, can be counted as the finest of its kind surviving in Ireland. A Latin inscription running along the top tells us that 'Matthew, by the grace of God, Bishop of Clonfert, and Patrick O'Naughton, canon of this house, caused me to be made Anno Domini 1471'. Beneath the inscription there is a frieze of four figures:

1. The winged St. Michael the Archangel, with youthful beardless face, sporting a great head of hair topped by a cross-shaped diadem, his body covered in feathers, brandishing a sword in his right hand, and holding an evenly-balanced scales in his left. Its left-hand pan holds a soul threatened by a long-eared devil, while the right-hand pan is

◀ The restored reredos and 1637 wall of the church of the Augustinian monastery at Clontuskert can be seen through the west doorway of 1471, one of the most decorative of its kind to survive from the Middle Ages in Ireland.

entirely occupied by another devil, trying to win the soul for itself as St. Michael weighs the souls on Judgment Day.

2. A bearded John the Baptist wearing a lambskin and with his finger pointing to the lamb on a disc which he holds in his left hand.
3. St. Catherine of Alexandria – a saint to whom all in need could pray for help – bearing a sword (point downwards) and with a wheel as her identifying attribute.
4. A mitred bishop holding a decorative crozier diagonally across his body. His identity remains uncertain, though the names of Saints Patrick, Brendan and Augustine have all been put forward as possibilities.

Beneath the latter two is an elongated animal growing out of a leaf, its long-outstretched front legs pointing towards a tree which separates the adjoining figures into two pairs of two, and which emerges from an arc of similar foliage surmounting the arched moulding of the doorway. There is an angel in each of the resulting spandrels, that on the right having a hammer, two dice and a pincers (symbols of the passion) on a shield it bears. There are further angels on top of the side-crockets, from the bottom of which animal-heads emerge.

The sides of the doorway are also intermittently decorated on the left with a variety of motifs. Going from top to bottom on left, we have a heraldic rose, two animals (griffin and lion?) facing one another, and a pelican vulning or piercing its breast, symbolising the church bleeding itself to feed its flock. Correspondingly on the right we have, at the top, a human face biting foliage and then, further down, the IHS symbol for Christ, a 'foliage service', a mermaid with comb and mirror, two quadrupeds with interlocking necks and, finally, a bird biting its back, back-to-back with a quadruped eating its tail. The precise symbolism contained in the various elements of this doorway is difficult to ascertain, but the weighing of souls by St. Michael suggests the battle of good versus evil as a possible theme, with the mermaid (or siren) being emblematic of a temptation towards the latter. The animals with interlocking necks have been interpreted tentatively as a sign of warding off evil, though their action could also suggest discord but, on the whole, the rich animal imagery of the doorway is now sadly beyond our ken. The unusual choice

of the four saints and their varying sizes has led to the suggestion that the doorway is not as it was originally designed, but it is probably unnecessary to adopt this extreme view. The bishop and St. Catherine make a second appearance on a font just inside the door on the left.

After its foundation in the twelfth century, and its suppression in the sixteenth, the third major event in the priory's building history was its being taken over into guardianship by the Commissioners of Public Works in 1970. At that stage, many of the walls were covered in ivy and in bad need of repair. St. Catherine must have had their interests at heart because, after excavation by Tom Fanning in 1971, the monastic buildings were extensively repaired and restored. All except two pieces of the splendid east window that had fallen in 1918 were recovered among the rubble, permitting the admirable restoration that we see today.

But even more remarkable was the restoration of the rood-screen which had been already in ruins when the canons returned and built their wall across the western end of the chancel in 1637, as some fragments from the screen were found in this later wall. In fact, the screen had originally stood where the cross-wall now stands, and the decision was taken to re-build the rood-screen immediately to the west of the 1637 wall, using the many fragments that could be assembled for the purpose. The screen is a triple-arched stone structure with gallery above for a rood, or Crucifixion group (presumably of wood, and no longer extant). This is the most complete medieval rood-screen in the country, that in Sligo Abbey being one of the few other examples known which could have rivalled it. It is a fine piece of Gothic vaulting, its keystones decorated with floral motifs. Further small sprigs of foliage sprout from the stone here and in other places, such as on the column base of the partially-reconstructed cloister – some of the pleasant surprises afforded by a closer inspection of the stonework which also provides us with a number of masons' marks.

But perhaps the greatest surprise of all on the rood-screen is the name IOHES (an abbreviation for Iohannes – John) carved at eye-level on the southern respond. One of the very few examples where a mason has signed his name rather than just making his mark on a late medieval building in Ireland, it shows how his achievement of erecting the screen must have been seen as something exceptional for the Augustinian community to

have allowed him sign his name in such a conspicuous position. He is probably the mason who signed the same name much higher up on a window in the Dominican priory in Portumna, suggesting that he is more likely to have been a secular mason rather than a canon or friar.

The monastery stands among a number of earthworks, the most obvious of which is a mound to the west of the building complex, but their date has yet to be established satisfactorily.

One of the curious carved heads guarding the entrance to a vault in the church at Creevaghbaun probably dates from the 19th century.

16. Creevaghbaun

CREEVAGHBAUN CHURCH, at first sight, seems like a normal small medieval parish church, though with the unusual feature of having a doorway in both the north and south walls. It also has a single cusped window in the east gable wall, and another in the south wall. What is unexpected is not only the rectangular building controlling entrance to the north doorway but, more particularly, the large vaults which take up a considerable portion of the eastern half of the church, which must have been inserted after the church had gone out of use. One, with its doorway facing north, is a massive limestone structure, with two heads on the roof-line guarding the door.

The second vault, beneath the east window, still bears the inscription:

> *I.H.S. This tomb was erectd for the rev. Frs of Criuaughbane by ye Rev. Will Barry, Grand Nephew to ye Revd James Barry Foundr of sd Convent Anno Domino 1780.*

The Reverend friars referred to are the successors of the Carmelite friars, who are said to have founded a house here in 1332, and which seems to have flourished until the friars left at some date unknown and went to Clare Island. It has been suggested that this happened during the Penal Days, but it is likely to have happened earlier, as it was during the Penal Days, sometime around 1730, that a new convent was founded by the Rev. James Barry mentioned in the inscription. Historical sources of the Carmelite order state that John Burk was elected prior in 1741, and he appears to have had a chalice made for Creevaghbaun, which is now in the possession of the Archbishop of Tuam. The community of friars would scarcely have numbered more than half a dozen, and continued in operation well into the nineteenth century. Two friars were professed in 1820, but only one in 1835. Some time before 1840, the prior left the contents of the friary to his nephew who, he believed, would become a Carmelite, but when he became a secular priest instead, his family took possession of half the land and half the convent, after which it presumably declined to its present ruined state.

17. Dunmore Abbey

THE AUGUSTINIAN FRIARY of Dunmore was a somewhat neglected National Monument until it came into more public notice recently when a large supermarket was built close to it. It was founded by Walter (Mór) de Bermingham, Ninth Baron Athenry, in 1425. The O'Kellys were also considerable benefactors, and, in 1430, indulgences were granted to those helping to build and furnish the friary. The founder's descendant was able to prevent its closure at the Suppression of the Monasteries, although the friars were forced to adopt a secular habit in 1547. It came into private hands later in the sixteenth century, but it was again a fully organised monastery with a congregation of over 30 in 1641. During Penal Times, the friars stayed in the locality but, in 1809, they finally left and moved to Athlone.

Angelo Maria Bigari's drawing of the church at Dunmore as it was in 1779 (National Library, 2122 TX(3), p. 20) shows the open arches of the medieval nave arcade which have since been blocked up. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

The church is a long rectangle in plan, interrupted by a tower at mid-length which probably formed part of the design from the beginning, and which is squat in comparison to other contemporary towers of the order. Its internal staircase survives intact. The main attraction of the friary today is the decorative west doorway of three orders with fluted chamfers and moulded capitals. The hood above has tall crockets ending in poppy heads. To one side, above the arch, is a panel bearing the de Bermingham coat of arms and a no longer perfectly-legible inscription, probably commemorating the founder, who died in 1428. Above the doorway is a two-light window. The eastern end of the church was converted to function as a Church of Ireland parish church, probably early in the eighteenth century, but it is now roofless – as is the part of the friary west of the tower, whose round-arched arcade in the north and south walls, originally separating nave and aisles, have long since been blocked up.

18. Eglish

THE RUINED FRIARY at Eglish near Castlegar in the parish of Ahascragh stands on a long hill sloping down to boggy terrain to the east, which makes understandable the various names it went by in the medieval period which include the word for hill – Monteceancohe, Sleushancough, and the monastery of Isleibhe (from *Sliabh*).

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, it is said to have been a Franciscan friary, but older accounts make it clear that this was a foundation of the Carmelites, one of the lesser-known of the four orders of mendicant friars who did so much for religion in rural Ireland during the later Middle Ages. Extrapolating from various pieces of information, it is likely that the friary was established when William O'Cormacain was bishop of Elphin in the years between 1393 and 1398. He, and Donald O'Kelly, lord of the area, gave the friars for their monastery an oratory which had been erected by local people after the discovery of a venerable cross around 1377 – a good reason for dedicating the monastery to the Holy Cross. In 1436, Pope Eugene IV granted facilities and privileges for

The window in the recently-repointed west wall of the former Carmelite church at Eglish would suggest a date around the fifteenth century for much of the surviving masonry.

the repair of the Carmelite house, and for the building of a monastery and church, with bell tower, bell, dormitory, refectory, cloister, cemetery, gardens, orchards, etc. A date in the middle third of the fifteenth century would seem appropriate, therefore, for the existing buildings which, however, offer only a small and fragmentary west window as possible dating evidence. It stands above a long-blocked west doorway of a rectangular church which must have been the focal point for the Carmelites'

religious activity, though no trace of the bell-tower mentioned in the historical sources can now be seen.

A lean-to altar-shelter with corrugated iron roof has been built up against the interior west wall (now whitewashed), and the originally four-light east window is now nothing but an ivied gaping hole. There is also one small window in the south wall, which, along with the north wall opposite, has suffered much demolition down the centuries.

The graves within the church date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but are undistinguished. The north-eastern corner of the church has been appropriated by the Mahon family as the vault for their dead, who are listed on a nineteenth-century headstone above it. Adjoining it, but outside the wall of the church and within the area of the former cloister, is an attractive early nineteenth-century monument erected in memory of members of the O'Daly family, as is made clear in an inscription on the top of the memorial. The exterior walls of the east and north sides of the domestic buildings of the cloister still survive to a remarkable extent – visible, not from the inside (where they are covered in ivy), but from the outside, where impressive remains of the masonry (including a gable) survive.

To the south-east of the church there is what appears to be a memorial chapel for the burial of members of the Mahon family, as it contains a number of their nineteenth-century memorials – among the shrubs.

The monastery was suppressed by king Henry VIII in 1537, when it passed to Sir Francis Sammes, but later returned to Crown ownership and, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, seems to have changed hands a number of times. Its owners were people of no particular note, and it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that it came into the hands of someone better-known in the form of the Earl of Clanrickarde – but at that stage, the church was probably only a little less ruinous than it is today – and it was the lands rather than the monastic ruins that were the valuable part worth obtaining.

Funding from The Heritage Council has helped to conserve the fabric of the building.

19. Kilconnell

IN THE VERY FIRST NUMBER of *The Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* just over one hundred years ago, the Ulsterman Francis Joseph Biggar said of Kilconnell that it 'is perhaps the most perfect of the Franciscan houses at present remaining to us in Ireland'. It is also one of the most important of the ancient ecclesiastical monuments of East Galway, and appreciated as such at least by those travelling on the Athenry-Ballinasloe road. Historical sources are at variance about the date of its foundation by the O'Kellys of Uí Maine – *The Annals of the Four Masters* plumping for 1353, while other manuscript sources prefer a date of 1414.

The latter is more likely, however, to judge by the surviving remains, none of which looks earlier than the fifteenth century.

It is, indeed, one of the best preserved of all the Franciscan friaries which have come down to us from late Medieval Ireland, its majesty and beauty heightened by the various tombs of the period which are let into its interior walls. The original buildings consisted of a long nave continuing into a choir of equal width. There is also a cloister (of which only three sides may have been built) and, adjoining it further east, two storey-buildings containing domestic areas, with dormitories above. What is called the sacristy may have been some kind of writing room. The cloister and refectory building were probably built with assistance from William O'Kelly, who died in 1420. But about half a century later the finest parts of the abbey were built – the tall and graceful tower inserted almost exactly in the middle of the church and seeming to emerge out of its roof, the south aisle joined to the nave by an arcade, and the south transept that is accessible from both nave and choir. The tower is one of the best of its kind, and underneath its vaulting it has fine carvings of a shield-bearing angel and an owl, whose nocturnal vigilance was perhaps a reminder to the friars to keep awake during night prayers. The flamboyant and cusped windows of the aisle and transept are of a high quality, but the flamboyant west window above the doorway may be an insertion of the sixteenth century.

The church has one of the most significant collections of late medieval tomb-niches anywhere in the country, of which the most important is that near the western end of the north wall. Its upper parts are taken up with an ogee canopy with wonderful flamboyant tracery, capped with crocketed finials bearing sculptured angels and human figures. But more significant are the six saints on the bottom, who are contained within a series of ogee-headed arches, each with its name inserted above – *St. John the Evangelist*, *St. Louis of Toulouse* with a Franciscan habit and crozier, *The Virgin* with a book, *St. John the Baptist* wearing a camel-skin and holding the Agnus Dei on a book, *St. James Major*, with his typical attribute of a scallop-shell adorning both hat and wallet while bearing the tau cross of the pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela, and

◀ The imposing fifteenth-century Franciscan friary church at Kilconnell is dominated by the tall tower at its centre.

Kilconnell Franciscan friary contains the best collection of western Irish tomb-niches of the period around 1500, including that near the western end illustrated here. Beneath a pointed arch with tracery evocative of the flames of a fire are carvings of *The Virgin* surrounded by various saints which, surprisingly, include two from France – *Louis of Toulouse* and *Denis of Paris*.

finally St. Denis of Paris wearing a monk's habit and scapular. What surprises here is the presence of two French saints Louis and Denis, who do not feature elsewhere in Irish medieval iconography, and suggest a French connection which may have come through the city of Galway. Louis's presence is understandable because he was one of the most prominent people ever to have joined the Franciscans, but the presence of Denis of Paris (who lived centuries before St. Francis) is less easy to

▲ One of the figures on the front of the canopied tomb in Kilconnell friary is that of *St. James Major*, with the characteristic shell attribute on his hat and pouch, and holding the T-shaped staff of the pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where the Apostle is said to have been buried.

The smiling fifteenth-century figures of a bishop (*St. Patrick?*) and *St. Francis* with his stigmata, crown the canopy of the tomb at the western end of Kilconnell friary.

explain. The tomb dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, but the family that erected it is not known.

Another tomb, of roughly the same date but located in the choir, would appear to have been associated with the O'Dalys, though the plaque within bearing their name is modern. Probably older is the O'Kelly tomb in the south wall opposite, with an ogival canopy and – like the O'Daly tomb – plain in front. The friary also contains some remarkable

seventeenth-century memorials with well carved and, on the whole, well-preserved lettering, including the Bytagh stone in the south wall of the choir, and an O'Daly memorial of 1674 in the north wall.

But the most interesting of all from an historical point of view is that of Matthew Barnewall, twelfth baron Trimleston who, as the inscription records, was 'transplanted into Connaght with others by orders of the usurper Cromwell and who died in 1667'. It is located in the Guardian's house to the north of the choir.

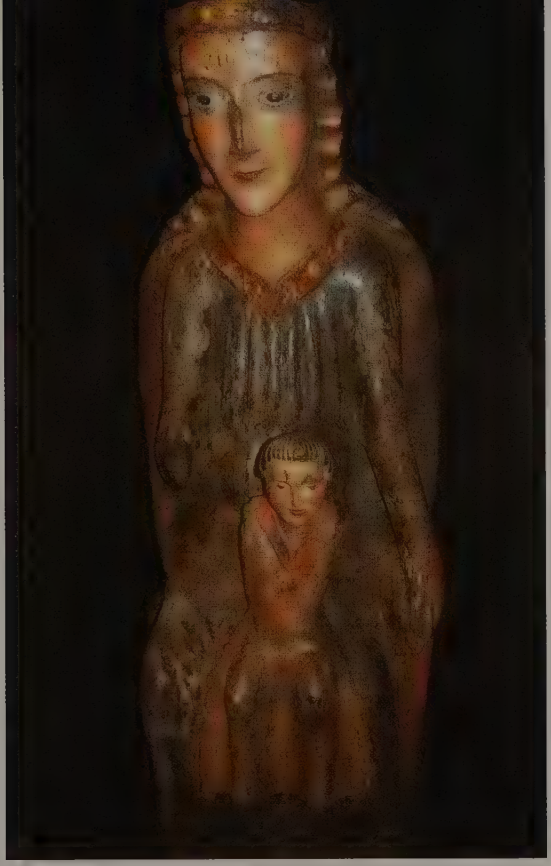
Only the east range and part of the south range of the cloister arcade survive, and these are notable for the wide variety of mason's marks carved into them. There is also a very large stone water basin in the cloister which must have come from the choir of the church. There are also the remains of two late-medieval tombstones in the transept, but these are uninscribed. A chalice of 1738 from Kilconnell was brought clandestinely to Louvain, but is now preserved in Dublin.

20. Kilcorban

THREE MILES EAST of Duniry is the Dominican friary of Kilcorban, where Thomas de Burgo, bishop of Clonfert, had granted a chapel and land in the fifteenth century to the brothers and sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic, which at the time was not yet an organised religious order. The chapel was dedicated to the Holy Rosary, or the Blessed Virgin of the Holy Rosary. The remains comprise a church and side-chapel, with moulded west doorway and simple, but well-preserved traceried east window. There are also some good and well-carved exterior two-light windows with decorated spandrels.

One plaque on the interior wall commemorates Teige mac Eoca (Tadg Keogh, O.P.), bishop of Clonfert from 1671 to 1689, who revitalised the Diocese and asked to be buried in the friary. This was because of his devotion to Mary the mother of God and his reverence for the miraculous wooden statue of the Madonna venerated there at the time, and now – along with other statues – preserved in the Clonfert Diocesan Museum in Loughrea.

Another plaque records the restoration of the chapel in 1920 by



The Madonna and Child from Kilcorban, now preserved in the Diocesan Museum in Loughrea, is perhaps the most serene wooden sculpture of this subject to survive from Medieval Ireland, probably continuing a late Romanesque style into the thirteenth century.

Anthony Francis, Earl of Westmeath and Baron Delvin, whose family burial place this is. His ancestors had been transplanted by Cromwell from their estates in Meath, and were lords of the castle of Pallas nearby until around 1960. The fine coat of arms (of Coade stone?) mounted in an outside wall is presumably that of the Nugent earls.

21. Loughrea Friary

ADJOINING THE ATTRACTIVE COMPLEX of the house and church of the Carmelite friars in the town is the ruin of the friary said to have been founded for their medieval predecessors by Richard de Burgo, Earl of Ulster, around 1300. However, the eastern end of the ruined church shows traces of what was probably a lancet window of five or seven lights which, together with the windows in the eastern end of the

south wall nearby, could suggest a somewhat earlier date for the foundation. This is undoubtedly the oldest surviving part of the structure. By 1437, the buildings were in need of repair, and an indulgence was granted to help to restore them. What we see today (though now heavily overpointed) is likely to be the happy outcome of that work, including the largest window with switch-line tracery which was inserted in the fifteenth century as the replacement of the original lancet windows.

The church, with west doorway, is articulated half way along its length by a solid tower with arch beneath and three string courses. Beside it, to the south, is a transept, entered through an arch with well-preserved capitals and mouldings and with a traceried window in the south wall. It has a large arch in its east wall which could conceivably have been part of a side-chapel of uncertain date.

The Carmelite friars were one of the four mendicant religious orders in medieval Ireland, and their imposing – if now ruined – friary in Loughrea is the most significant witness to their importance in the town during the Middle Ages.

Opposite page: The well-preserved tower of the medieval Carmelite friary in Loughrea can be glimpsed through the traceried window above the door in the west gable of the church. Its label-stops are noteworthy for their carvings of a lion and a fabulous beast.

The friary was suppressed in the mid-sixteenth century and was later given to Richard, Earl of Clanrickarde. By the mid-eighteenth, the friars were back again. A stone just inside the west doorway bears an inscription to the effect that Father Patrick B... 'underneath was layed the 25th Septr 1755'.

That doorway, with its good hood-mouldings of the fifteenth century, bears on its underside the inscribed date of 1783, and above the doorway there is a two-light traceried window with a lion and a fabulous beast as label-stops.

Note the naive poem 'My Grave' on the outer wall of the south transept.

St. Ruth, the French General at Aughrim, is said to be buried in an unmarked grave here.

22. Meelick

MEELICK, close to the banks of the Shannon, is the only medieval Franciscan church in Ireland that is still in use, though not continuously since 1414, when Pope John XXII issued a mandate to the Bishop of Clonfert to open two Franciscan houses in his diocese. These had been the first new foundations of the order in Galway since it had taken over the monastery of Kilnaleghin ('Abbey') from the Carthusians in 1371. Between 1405 and 1534 mendicant friars of one order or another were to supply bishops to the diocese, which was certainly unusual in Ireland at the time. The founder of Meelick was one of the O'Maddens – probably Breasal – and the family kept close ties with the place down to the last century.

The church is a long, tall hall that has been half-interrupted in a modern restoration by a clever wooden rood-screen which gives the impression of a divide, but which is sufficiently transparent to ensure the visual unity of the whole interior of the church. Two blocked-up arches in the south wall indicate the former presence of a south side-chapel not far from the altar. Between the arches is a squat figure of St. Francis revealing his stigmata, which may well have come from a now no longer existent cloister to the north of the church. The east window is a fine flamboyant example in medieval style, but probably inserted in the late nineteenth century, as were presumably also the windows above the west doorway.

A Fransciscan friary in the Middle Ages, Meelick is one of the rare examples in Ireland of a pre-Reformation church still being used for Catholic parish worship, having been restored for the purpose in the nineteenth and again in the twentieth century.

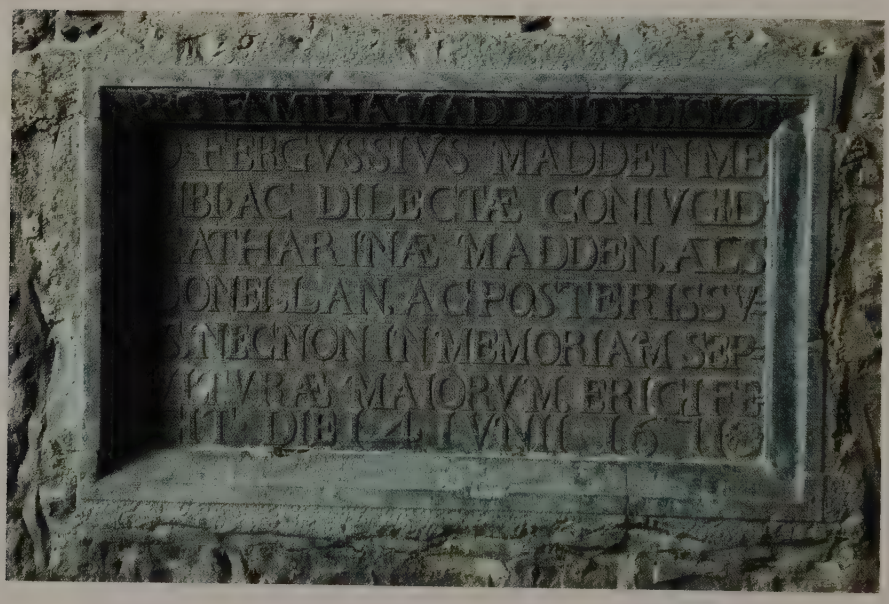
The church is recorded in 1445 as having been 'impoverished and threatened with ruin on account of wars and other disasters', whereupon Pope Eugene IV granted an indulgence for its repair, though it is difficult to know which parts of the monastery benefited from this exercise. Within 35 years, the community had joined up with the popular and stricter Observantine movement and, in 1559, the monastery was suppressed and ruined by the English. It was restored in 1595 and again twice ruined subsequently until, in 1645, the friars of the community came out of their hiding-places and took part in a great procession to the High Altar where mass was said by their superior, the Very Rev. James Madden. After this, the Franciscans continued their ministrations for centuries to come – a plaque on the wall recording the death of the last prior of the community, a Fr. Reynolds, in 1853. The return of the friars in 1645 was probably the trigger for the insertion in the side walls throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century and beyond of a remarkable series of memorial plaques with high-relief lettering, which are among the best in the whole country. That of Laurence Cullen of 1645 is of a particularly high quality,

though also noteworthy is that of the Maddens of Lismore of 1671. The same high-relief lettering is found in a much-damaged Latin inscription above the door in the north wall that leads into the sacristy, where the last two digits of the date are sadly missing.

The church was restored at the end of the nineteenth century, and again in 1985, at which stage the rood-screen mentioned above was created, and the black marble altar brought forward in front of it. Wood was used for the altar-screen, the lectern and the support for the bronze tabernacle which, like the remainder of the 1985 restoration, was the work of Ray Carroll. Probably the most famous friar associated with Meelick was John Colgan, who was Guardian in 1635, and went on to collect and publish major collections of the lives of the Irish saints.

There was once a Norman motte somewhere in the vicinity that had been erected by William de Burgo in 1203, and a castle built by his son Richard in 1229 that was destroyed by Felim O'Conor in 1316 – but of neither does a trace remain.

The memorial to the Lismore branch of the well-known local Madden family erected in Meelick church in 1671 is a classic example of the high quality achieved in the art of lettering by East Galway masons in the seventeenth century



Folklore

Associated with Meelick is a legend concerning the O'Maddens. Queen Elizabeth I's Lord Deputy, Sydney, had invited them – and many other native Irish nobles – to a great banquet at Mullaghmast in Kildare in 1577, at which a formal treaty was to be signed between the Irish and the English. When Donal O'Madden and his son Ambrose had crossed the Shannon to join others who were heading for the great feast, they heard the bells of Meelick sounding for Vespers which, on that particular day, were the Solemn Vespers of the Dead. Remembering the O'Madden dead of past generations, the two went back to the church to participate in the Solemn Vespers.

When the service was ended, they re-mounted their horses and rode away, only to be stopped in their tracks by a kind of spectre which appeared to them, and warned of impending doom for those attending the banquet at Mullaghmast. Chastened by the apparition, they decided to abandon their journey. And how glad they must have been that they did so when they heard, a fortnight later, of the sad tidings that all the Irish attending the feast had been surrounded and treacherously slaughtered by English soldiers in the rath of Mullaghmast. Not a single Irish lord survived to tell the tale.

23. Portumna

At some period unspecified, the Cistercians of Dunbrody in Wexford had a chapel of SS. Peter and Paul in Portumna but, being disused, it was granted before 1414 to the Dominican friars, who started a house there. It was the O'Maddens who founded it, and the Dominicans added the name of the Blessed Virgin to those of Peter and Paul as the dedicatees of the monastery. There is quite a possibility that some of the windows in the north and south walls of the church may be thirteenth century in date, suggesting that the Dominicans utilised the earlier Cistercian chapel, and then added to it after papal indulgences were granted for the conservation of the church in 1414 and again in 1446. Thus, most of the surviving building dates from the fifteenth century. The church was long and hall-shaped in plan, with a tower at not quite mid-

length that is preserved up to the level of the church walls.

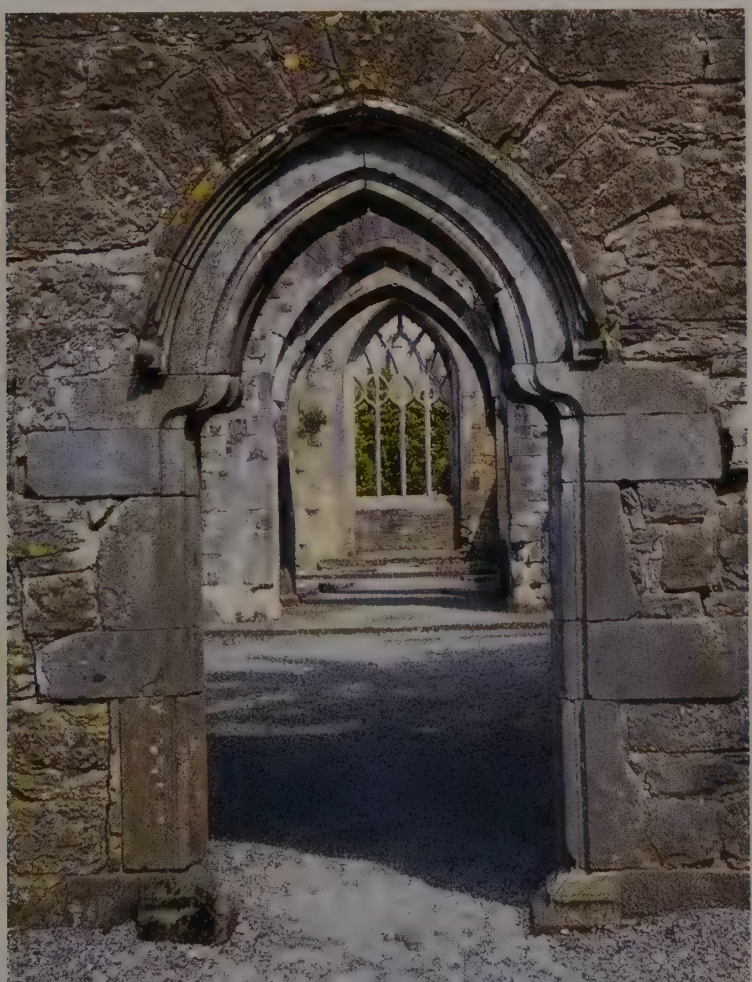
The most remarkable features of the church are the east window, which has a series of cusped orbs at the bottom of the fork in the tracery, and that in the south transept designed as variations on a comma shape – both patterns not encountered elsewhere in Ireland. The south window has a further interesting feature in that it bears the name *Johanne* – probably the same mason who signed his name at Clontuskert in the last third of the fifteenth century. In the church there are seventeenth-century memorials, some lying on the ground, others – in good high-relief lettering of the period – inserted in the walls. A doorway in the north wall of the choir – with floral decoration on one side of the base – leads to a

The Dominicans chose Portumna 'as a place remote from the noise and turmoil of the world that they might serve the Most High', and the sense of peace and tranquility still prevails from the priory there. It is also notable for its traceried windows, that seen here on the left bearing the inscription *Johanne* (John) – the only mason known to have signed his name on a medieval Irish window.

passage and a small chapel (with upturned head on the base of the doorway), which has further seventeenth-century memorial tablets and unusually-decorated corbels. Immediately to the north of the church there is a cloister, with arcades consisting of moulded pillars bearing plain pointed arches, some of which were restored by the Office of Public Works in 1954. Further north again are other domestic buildings, one room of which has a fine fireplace. Leask maintains that there was once a porch with a lean-to roof up against the west wall of the church, but what is visible today is an unusual doorway curving inwards below the arch, and surmounted by a window higher up the gable with a shamrock carved in one of its spandrels.

Around, or sometime after 1582, the friary came into the hands of the Earls of Clanrickarde who built some three or four decades later the

A series of different arch-forms lead the eye from the unusual west doorway to the unique east window of the Dominican priory at Portumna.



splendid castle nearby which has recently been beautifully restored. Though the monastery had been suppressed in 1540, the church was restored for religious use again in 1631, and converted into a Church of Ireland church in 1762. In the leafy surrounds of Portumna Castle, close to the banks of Lough Derg, the priory at Portumna has one of the most peaceful and serene settings of any of the ecclesiastical monuments in East Galway.

24. Ross Errilly

Ross Errilly, located close to a rivulet forming the northern boundary of County Galway, is one of the largest, best-preserved and most picturesque of the medieval Franciscan friaries of Ireland. Burning by English soldiers in the early seventeenth century has meant the loss of historical records, so that dates varying from 1351 to 1498 have been suggested for the foundation of the friary. A date close to the latter is more likely, and the architecture suggests that it was built scarcely any earlier than the late fifteenth century, the Gannard family being the most likely patrons.

From a distance, it is dominated by the typical tall, battlemented, Franciscan tower with three string courses, which plays a pivotal role in the plan of the monastery. It stands almost exactly half-way along an elongated church with, unexpectedly, an off-centre west doorway which, as at Killursa nearby, could suggest that this was an entrance to an earlier church on the same site but not built on the same axis. On entering, one is struck by the unique balcony in the first floor of the tower which may have acted as a kind of rood-screen bearing a group of Crucifixion sculptures. To the right is an arcade leading into a double transept, the pillar separating the two bearing what must be one of Ireland's oldest surviving graffiti, dated 1666 (there are also interesting lines incised into the plaster). A look under the arch of the tower provides a view of the fine switchline-tracery east window of a kind used elsewhere also in the transepts, and a small chapel added to the south transept. The sacristy (known locally as 'Burke's Castle') is a three-storey building standing virtually independent of the church outside its north-eastern corner. The choir has one good-quality wall-tomb of c.1500, but is otherwise over-cluttered with massive family vaults of more recent centuries.

The community must have been large in its heyday to judge by the extensive domestic quarters to the north of the church, consisting of two

An aerial view of Ross Errilly Franciscan friary demonstrates the extent of its domestic buildings, placed at right angles to the long church, seen running diagonally across the picture and surmounted by a tower with an unusual rood-screen at its base.

▲ The well-preserved spiky gables and tower of the Franciscan friary of Ross Errilly add drama to the North Galway skyline.

The window high up in the west wall of the Franciscan friary of Ross Errilly provides a view through to the tall battlemented tower, which straddles the centre of the church. It remains unexplained why the church doorway on the bottom right is off-centre. It may have belonged to an earlier church, perhaps helping to explain the 1351 date suggested for the foundation.

square cloister garths. That next to the church has a fine cloister arcade, with arches clustered in groups of five, bearing occasional floral ornament, and with dormitories directly above. On the eastern side of the more northerly, outer, cloister garth is the refectory, complete with reader's desk, and formerly with further dormitories on the first floor above. It is difficult to assign functions to many of the rooms in the cloister area, spread over two or even three floors, some with fireplaces. However, we can be confident in describing the northernmost building of the cloister complex as a kitchen, as it has a large oven for baking (approachable from two

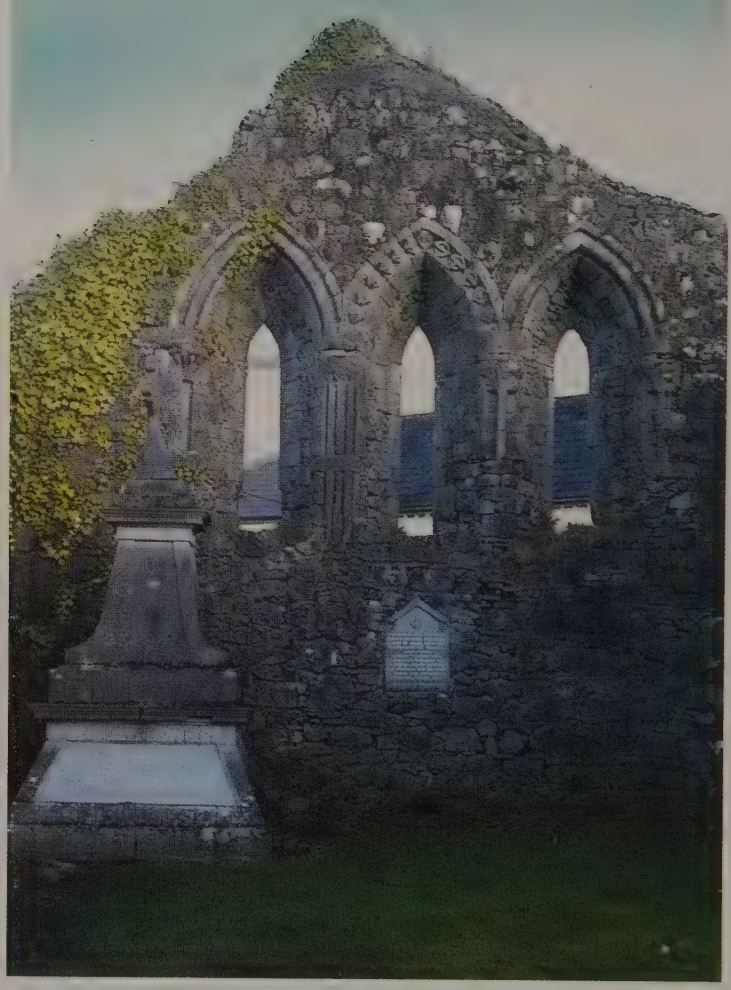
sides), and also a tank for keeping fish alive. Outside it was a mill, which was powered by a small rivulet which passed beneath it.

After the Suppression of the Monasteries, the friary came into the hands of the Earl of Clanrickarde who, as elsewhere, gave protection to the friars, and doubtless supported the building of a causeway to the friary in 1572. For almost two centuries thereafter, the friars came back five or six times to occupy the friary, as circumstances permitted, but each time they had to flee – until they finally departed in 1753, never to return.

25. Tuam: St. Jarlath's Church

ST. JARLATH is the patron saint of Tuam who was – according to tradition – sent out by St. Brendan of Clonfert to found a monastery wherever his cart broke down. Tuam was where it happened, which is why the saint's attribute is a cart-wheel, as seen, for instance, in the stained-glass window depicting him in the Catholic Cathedral in the town.

It is possible that the site of his monastery may be marked by the ruins of Temple Jarlath on High Street, though most authorities identify it as the church of the Premonstratensian Abbey of the Holy Trinity founded in the early thirteenth century, without there being any agreement as to precisely when the foundation took place, by whom or from which mother house. But the stones inserted into the wall above the triple window in the east wall and decorated with human heads carved in Romanesque style on the voussoirs would argue that there was a church here before the Premonstratensians ever arrived. However, there can be little doubt that the style of carving of the windows – diamond shapes standing out in relief on the arches, and late versions of scalloped capitals – would date the surviving east end of the church to around the first quarter of the thirteenth century, just around the time when the Premonstratensians would probably have been settling in Tuam. The decoration belongs to what is known as 'The School of the West', a style of stone ornament used largely in Connacht (as at Abbeyknockmoy and Drumacoo), in churches of the Cistercians and Augustinians, but no other Premonstratensian house is known to have practised it.



In a park in the town centre of Tuam stand the ruins of St. Jarlath's church, with a trio of early Gothic lancet windows decorated in the Late Romanesque style of 'The School of the West', and executed perhaps by the same masons who worked on the Drumacoo doorway (p. 8) around the 1220s.

The O'Conor Donellan mausoleum to the north of the east end may possibly have formed a part of the church originally. A gap separates it from the tower which would have provided clergy with accommodation at the western end of the church, where a curious tablet can now be seen inscribed with 'The Last Request'. The church was a favourite place of burial for the citizens of Tuam, whose tombstones are now either recumbent in the churchyard, or uprooted and placed against the wall of the parkland in which the church ruins and tower now stand.

A *Conservation Report on Templejarlath Church* was prepared for The Heritage Council by John Cronin in November 2002. The report details building conservation issues to be taken into account in the future management of the site.

Celtic Revival Sites

26. Ahascragh Catholic Church

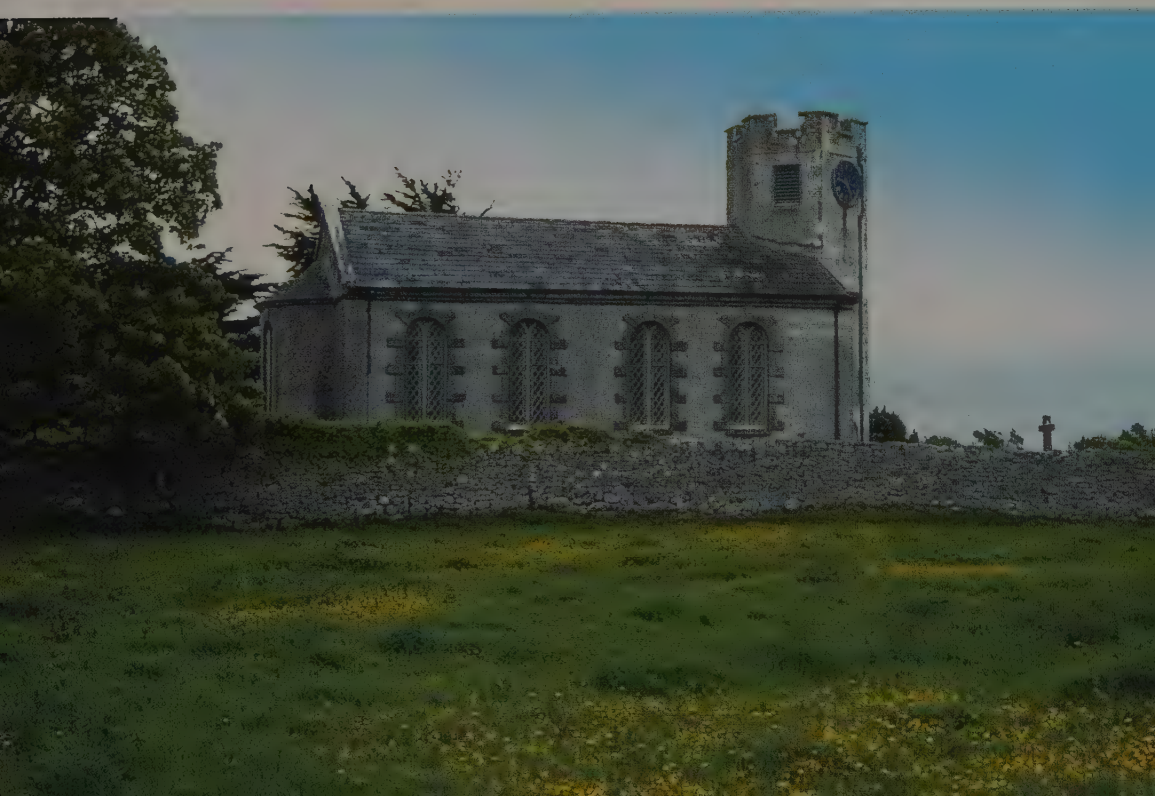
ST. CUAN'S CHURCH, Ahascragh, reconstructed by W.H. Byrne in 1932-33, has two windows of the first decade of the twentieth century signed 'J. Clarke and Sons, Frederick Street'. This was Joshua Clarke, father of Harry, whose subjects here are *The Annunciation* and *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. Behind the altar is a *Crucifixion* window, its figures having richly coloured garments, but the faces are too sentimental for Clarke, though they may be a product of his Studio.

▲ *The Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Catholic church at Ahascragh is a vivid and pleasantly old-fashioned window of around 1910 by Joshua Clarke, father and teacher of the more famous Harry.

27. Ardrahan Church of Ireland Church

THE TRAVELLER FROM GALWAY on the road to Gort cannot fail to be struck by the towered church standing against a background of trees on a prominent hillock to the right on entering the village of Ardrahan – and so much better preserved than the thirteenth-century castle on the left. The site is one that had been chosen for an early Christian monastery, the only physical survivor of which is the Round Tower fragment on the outside of the churchyard's south-western wall, from which it distinguishes itself through the massive size of the ashlar masonry used. Of the ancient monastery's history nothing is known. Probably unrelated to it, although using the same dominant location in the landscape, are the remains of a medieval church on the left of the path leading to the present church entrance.

The Church of Ireland church at Ardrahan was built in 1809 from local contributions and with a grant from the Board of First Fruits. Seen from the north, its most distinctive feature is the octagonal tower with clock at the western end.



The richly-coloured three-light east window of the Church of Ireland church in Ardrahan represents *The Resurrection*, showing the soldiers asleep as Christ rises from the tomb accompanied by angels. It was presented to the church in 1908 by the fifth Lord Clanmorris in memory of his parents.

This entrance is at the base of an hexagonal tower which stands battlemented and with clock at the western end of the church – which is a long rectangle in shape with an apse at the eastern end. Both belfry and clock were erected by people of many denominations, which must have been seen as a remarkable show of ecumenism before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 – the church having been built exactly twenty years earlier at a cost of over £900, a considerable sum in those days.

For a structure of its size, its most notable feature is the organ, presented by Bangor parish in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, although no longer now in use. The wooden gallery at the western end of the church hides part of the classically-pedimented organ-case, suggesting that the gallery was built after the organ was placed in position. There are some fine mural monuments commemorating local

gentry whose families worshipped here – the St. Georges of Tyrone House, and the Taylors and Shaw-Taylors of Castle Taylor, among others.

The stained glass in the church owes its existence to the generosity of another Galway family, the Binghams, Lords Clanmorris. The three-light window in the apse, representing *The Resurrection*, was presented in 1908 by the fifth Lord Clanmorris in memory of his parents, though the manufacturer's name is not given. The side walls of the church are pierced by three two-light windows, one of those on the south side bearing stained glass depicting *Faith* and *Charity* and erected at probably around the same time as the apse windows to commemorate two further Binghams, Burton Percy and Bentinck Yelverton. All of the windows are rather traditional in style, their conservative design taking no cognisance of the innovative, not to say revolutionary, developments in stained glass taking place down the road at Labane inspired by the Martyns of Tullira. The leather-bound bible displayed on the lectern was presented by Dermot McCalmore of the 7th Hussars in memory of his grandmother, Sarah, Lady Clanmorris, in 1887, and is in remarkably good condition for all the service it has given for over a century. The baptismal font is in the middle of the centre aisle, and headstones – one going back to the seventeenth century – are stored in the porch for safe-keeping, along with some other miscellaneous stones.

This sandstone fragment found recently in the churchyard of the Church of Ireland church at Ardrahan is the only known decorated stone to survive from an earlier church built on the site in the second half of the twelfth century. This Romanesque church probably stood in the shadow of the Round Tower, whose base still survives in the south-western wall of the churchyard.

28. Aughrim: Holy Trinity Church

THE CRUCIFORM SHAPE of the Church of Ireland church of the Holy Trinity in Aughrim makes it an unusually tall structure for a Board of First Fruits church of its length. Consecrated by the Bishop of Killaloe and Clonfert on Trinity Sunday, 1819 (hence the dedication), it is entered by a western tower of medieval massiveness that is topped by a tall and graceful spire.

Under the guidance of the then rector, the Very Rev. C. B. Champ, Dean of Clonfert, the church was thoroughly renovated in 1969, when it was fitted with a new roof and ceilings, and a vestry donated by the

◀ The Church of Ireland church in Aughrim was built in 1819 to accomodate 300 parishioners. Its plan roughly in the shape of a Greek equal-armed cross is unusual for Board of First Fruits-aided churches of the time, but displays their characteristic spiky pinnacles which culminate in the tall spire. The Battle of Aughrim was fought in the surrounding area in 1691.

Mothers' Union. The Huguenot cross inserted by Dean Champ in the three-light east window in memory of his father recalls the role played by the Huguenots in the famous Battle of Aughrim fought on the outskirts of the village on July 12th, 1691, when the Jacobites were defeated after their commander, St. Ruth, was killed by a cannon ball, leaving the field to the victorious Williamite General, Ginkel, who was later created Baron of Aughrim and Earl of Athlone.

Not far from the church is an interpretative centre commemorating the battle, organised by the deceased National School teacher Martin Joyce, and opened by the President of Ireland, Her Excellency Mary Robinson, in June 1992. It is now cared for by Galway County Council.

29. Ballinasloe: St. John's Church

THE MOST DOMINANTLY-SITED BUILDING of all in the town of Ballinasloe is the Church of Ireland church of St. John the Evangelist, which stands on an elevated site above the Fair Green. Originally a Board of First Fruits church of 1818, it was considerably renovated in 1842, when the tower above the west doorway appears to have been added. It is a cruciform structure in medieval Gothic style, with raised chancel, the south transept acting as a special Healing Chapel that commemorates the Revd. J.W.B. Furling who founded a branch of the Healer Prayer Union within the parish.

Around the corner, on the south wall of the sanctuary, is a bronze tablet erected in memory of the Revd. Philip Graydon Tibbs, to whom the church owes a great deal, as it was he who restored the church after a disastrous fire on Ascension Day in 1899. He had a new organ built, and added the chancel, in which there is a fine four-light window erected by Arthur Corcoran in 1928 in memory of his sister Jane. The unnamed firm

The Church Of Ireland church of St. John stands in a dominant position above the Fair Ground in Ballinasloe.

The two aspects of Christ shown in the two centre lights of the early twentieth-century east window of St. John's Church of Ireland church in Ballinasloe are explained in the pair of inscriptions above the two figures: *The Light of the World* and *The Good Shepherd*. They can be counted among the finest examples of Church of Ireland stained glass in East Galway.

IHS
I the bright and the morning
XP
I the good shepherd

which produced the window deserves much praise for adding strikingly to the ornamentation of the church. Inscribed 'I am Alpha and Omega', and highlighting those same Greek letters in its design, the four-light window features in its two inner lights *Christ as the Light of the World* and as *The Good Shepherd*.

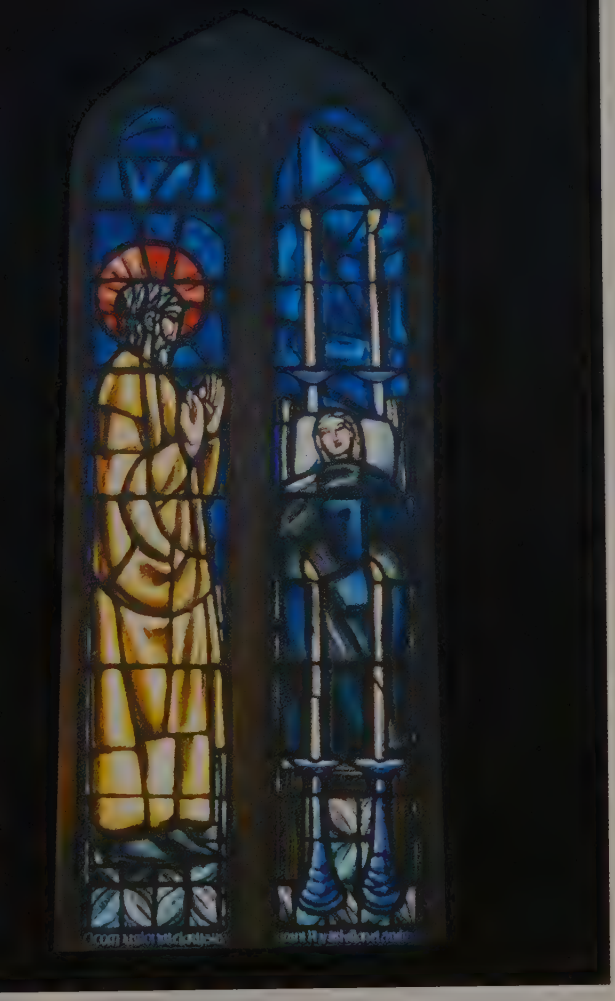
Noteworthy in the former is the lantern which Christ holds, its light falling cleverly on his garment, and the brocading on his clothing in the *Good Shepherd* window is also remarkably well crafted. The two outer windows represent, respectively, *The Prodigal Son* and *The Good Samaritan*, with considerable attention given to attractive details.

The wooden roof is worthy of note and, interestingly, the clock in the tower is not the responsibility of the Church but of the citizens of Ballinasloe, according to an agreement of 1901. Local people operate a roster to manage the opening hours.

30. Ballinasloe: St. Michael's Catholic Church

THE EMINENT Victorian architect, J.J. McCarthy, was awarded the premium in the competition for the Catholic church of St. Michael the Archangel in Ballinasloe in 1846. The church was to have been dedicated to 'Our Lady of Dolours', but McCarthy's original concept was never built, probably because the Famine intervened. But the foundation stone for a revised version dedicated to St. Michael – probably the work of the equally eminent A.W.N. Pugin – was laid in 1852, and the consecration of the church six years later was presided over by Cardinal Wiseman. The fine structure consists of a nave and aisles, a chancel, and side chapels dedicated to St. John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin. The tower was completed to roof-level by the time of consecration, but the spire was added later. The forty-five foot high chancel arch and the apsidal Sanctuary are probably due to Pugin's work of revision, but the remainder owes much to McCarthy, whose genius for Gothic revival style is already stamped on this, one of his earliest known churches.

The interior was made even more attractive in the twentieth century by

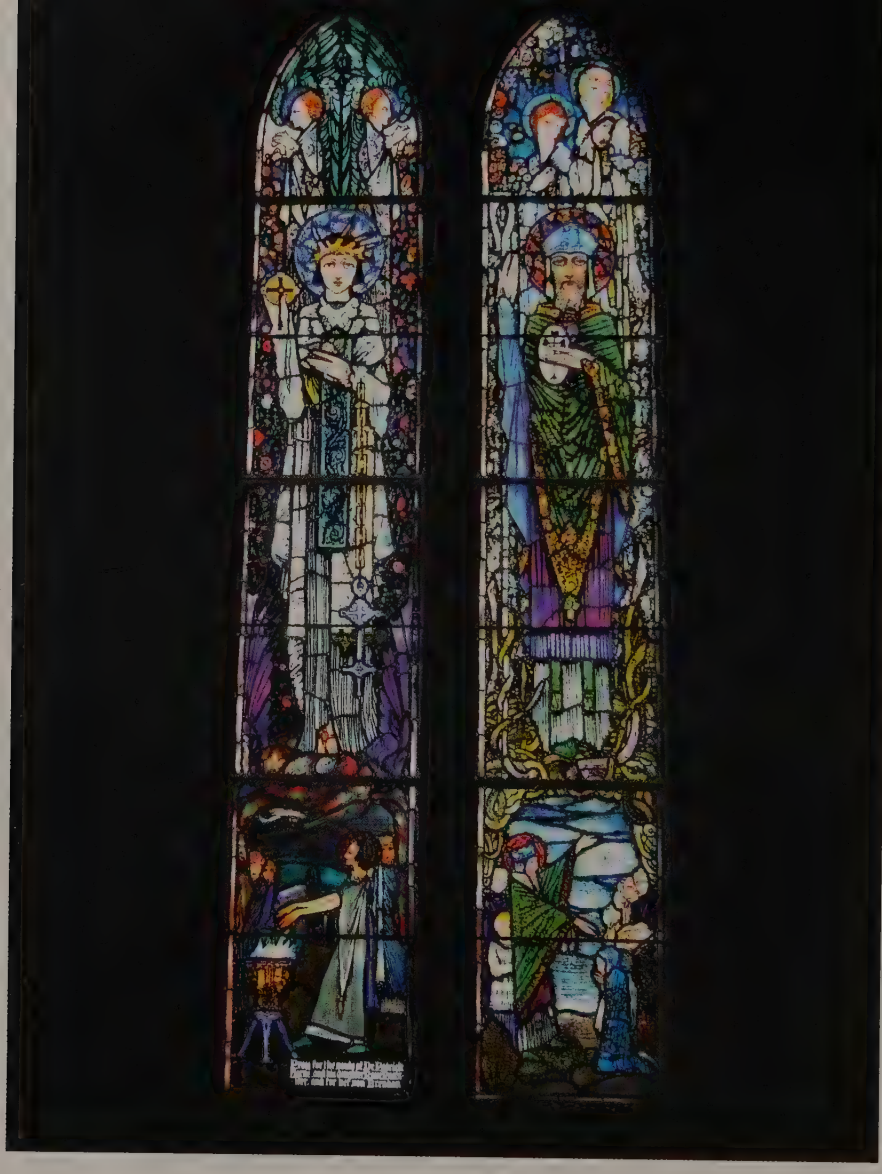


▲

The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus, of 1958, is one of the two striking windows by Patrick Pollen in the north side of the nave of St. Michael's church in Ballinasloe.

The intricate Gothic woodwork of the roof of the nave in St. Michael's church in Ballinasloe is a veritable *tour-de-force*, carried out by a Mr. O'Brien of Loughrea with the help of local carpenters. The lamps are a modern addition.

the addition of a number of important stained glass windows. The most significant of these is the 1925 twin-light window representing St. Patrick and St. Rose of Lima, conceived and designed by Harry Clarke and carried out under his supervision in his Studio. The unusual combination of saints is due to the fact that an inscription on one of the windows asks for a prayer for Dr Patrick Horne and his daughter Rose Rossiter, and for her son Brendan.



The window representing *St. Rose of Lima* and *St. Patrick* in St. Michael's Catholic church in Ballinasloe is the only example in East Galway that was designed by the great artist Harry Clarke (1889–1931). It dates from 1925.

St. Rose (1586-1617) is patron saint of Peru and of all South America and was the first person born in the Americas to have been canonised – a fact worth pointing out to American visitors! St. Patrick bears the shamrock on an oval background, and, below, he is seen to be preaching to the women of Ireland. Next to the Harry Clarke is a signed Earley window of 1940 representing St. *Bernadette* and the local patron, St. *Grellan*,

▲ *St. Patrick preaching to the women of Ireland* is the subsidiary theme beneath the full figure of the National Apostle by Harry Clarke (1925) in St. Michael's Church in Ballinasloe.

Mia Cranwill's 1926 tabernacle with Christ and two apostles on the altar of St. Michael's church is a brilliant adaptation of early medieval Irish enamel and metalwork motifs to create Celtic Revival, and even Art Deco, designs.

the latter of whom wears a richly-textured garment and holds a disc apparently picturing himself ministering to the sick. Beneath, he can be seen kneeling before a Crucifix and praying in a nocturnal vigil. On the opposite wall are two fine Patrick Pollen windows, *The Holy Family* and *The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus*, inserted in 1958. The other windows are of mixed quality and date, not signed, and not easy to attribute to particular studios.

There are also other important works of art in the church, the most notable of which is the tabernacle in gold, silver and enamel, bearing a representation of *Christ at Emmaus* created by Mia Cranwill, the metalworker of the Celtic Revival in Ireland.

Another is the fine sculpture in white Carrara marble of *The Dead Christ* signed Ailbe de Paor (Albert Power) and dated 1928. There is a curious but powerful recent Crucifix figure in metal. Above the chancel arch is a

painting on canvas of the Holy Trinity, originally by Harry Clarke, who was awarded a Tailteann prize for it, but – as the authors of *The Shell Guide to Ireland* cynically noted – its restoration was entrusted to a housepainter in the 1960s. The 1921 mural paintings in the chancel by Joseph Tierney represent St. Brendan (Diocesan Patron) and St. Grellan (local Saint), who also appear among the stained glass windows.

One further noteworthy feature of the church is the decorative wooden roof, some of it executed by a Mr O'Brien of Loughrea, the remainder carried out under local superintendence. The recent restoration, completed in December 2002 after a fire, has added some candelabra-like lamps hanging from the ceiling, heavy but assimilating well into the roof timber among which they hang.

It is worth noting that the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes at the eastern end of the town, [Creagh Church], has two single-light porch windows (*Annunciation, Nativity, St. Joseph*) by Patrick Pye, the only surviving artist who contributed windows to Loughrea Cathedral. There are also some examples of windows from the Harry Clarke Studio.

31. Ballinderreen Catholic Church

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH at Ballinderreen is a T-shaped structure with slated wooden roof, started in 1854 and – according to an inscription in the south wall – reconstructed in 1973. It has two windows worthy of note. That in the north transept is a good-quality traditional representation of *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, but of interest because of the Celtic-revival interlace and animal ornament particularly noticeable at the bottom of the window around the words 'Pray for the Donor'. The window is signed by Campbell Bros. of Belfast. The second window of note is over the west doorway. It is *The Deposition* attributed to Child and executed in 1916. There are also seven abstract windows by Phyllis Burke.

When the church was reconstructed in 1973, a whole new east wall was built, into which was built an enamel and metal tabernacle attrac-

The *Adoration of the Shepherds* window (*c.* 1910-1920) by Campbell Bros. of Belfast in the north transept of Ballinderreen is noteworthy for its Celtic Revival interlace and animal ornament.

The metal and enamel tabernacle illustrating *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* (by Ray Carroll?) was a striking addition to the church at Ballinderreen when it was remodelled in 1973.

tively representing *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes*. Above it on the same wall is a Crucifix figure against the background of a golden cross, the Christ figure having the feet parallel to one another in the Romanesque fashion. The crucifix is too high to inspect for an artist's signature, but none is attached to the tabernacle. They may possibly both be the work of Ray Carroll.

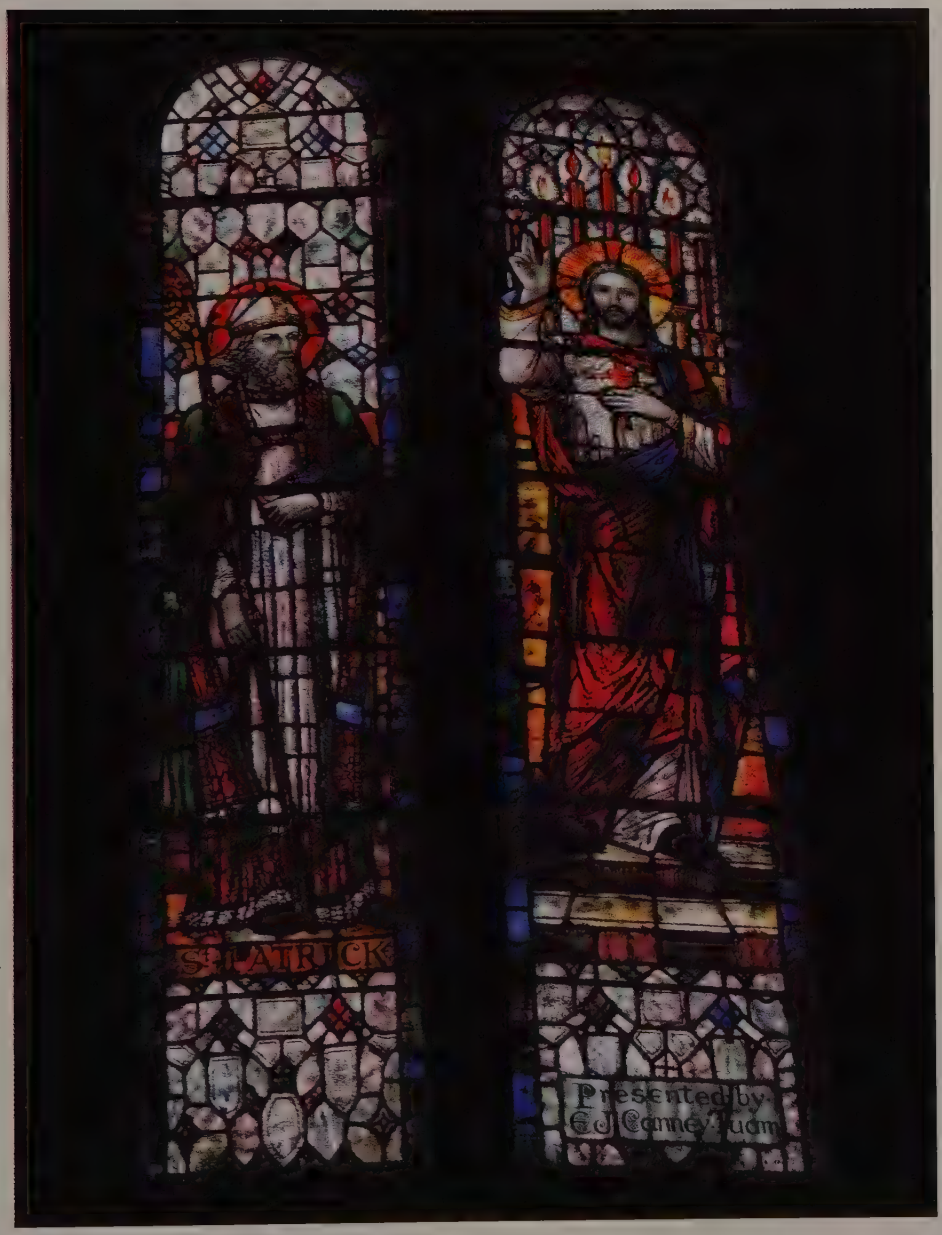
32. Belclare Church

BELCLARE, NAMED AFTER A CASTLE which guarded the road to Tuam, was the site of a medieval Franciscan foundation, and now has an attractive Catholic church dating from the first half of the 1920s. It is a small, simple, nave-and-chancel church with very short transepts. The south transept also acts as an entrance porch, and houses a stone statue of St. Teresa of Lisieux and a plaster *Pietà* donated by Margaret Higgins, who died in 1945. There is an appealing chancel arch, the stones of which are painted on, but well done to make them look real.

The altar, brought forward after Vatican II, was – as a plaque informs us – erected in memory of Rev. James Heany, formerly curate of Belclare, who died in 1920. The tabernacle is flanked by statues of *The Virgin and Child* and *The Sacred Heart*. The baptismal font is nineteenth-century, probably a survivor from an earlier church, but the unframed Stations of the Cross are unremarkable.

The only items of real interest are the three windows in the east wall behind the altar, executed by the Clare-born stained-glass artist Catherine O'Brien in 1924. The central window bears the inscription 'Presented by E.J. Canney, Tuam', and it probably applies to all three. The subjects represented are *The Sacred Heart*, flanked by *St. Brigid* holding her church and a firebrand, and *St. Patrick* holding his crozier and a book, with a very decorative vestment – bearing figures in sixteenth-or seventeenth-century style.

Not far from the present church, higher up on the northern slopes of Knocknacarrigeen are the ruins of a medieval church, accessible up a steep, grassy path. The older name 'Templenamraher' suggests that it may have been the location of a medieval Franciscan Friary.



Catherine O'Brien (1881-1963) was one of Sarah Purser's favoured stained glass artists in *An Túr Gloine*, and her only windows in East Galway are in the church at Beiclare, where her *St. Patrick* and *The Sacred Heart* of 1924 can be seen above the altar.

East Galway has one of the richest collections of medieval wooden statuary anywhere in Ireland, including the colourful *Madonna and Child* of the thirteenth or fourteenth century from the old monastery at Clonfert that is now preserved in the Catholic church nearby.

33. Clonfert: St. Brendan's Catholic Church

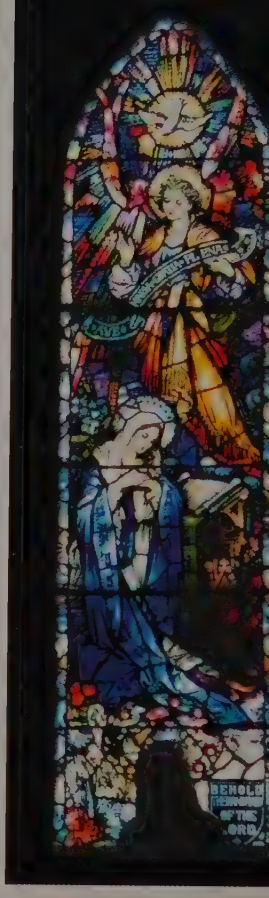
THIS NINETEENTH CENTURY CHURCH is unremarkable except for the wooden statue of *Our Lady of Clonfert* dating from the late thirteenth / early fourteenth century.

34. Eyrecourt Catholic Church

AN ATTRACTIVE, well-kept T-shaped church in the neo-Gothic style of the nineteenth century, with a curious little belfry-tower rising from the roof at the western end. Its most striking feature is the stained glass window in the east wall, erected by the Rev. Martin Leahy in 1932. It is a four-light window with what I take to be *St. Brendan presenting his Cathedral* on the left, and also seen in his boat above. In the second light from the left is a female figure, kneeling and wearing a rosary around the waist – presumably *The Virgin*, accompanied by candle-bearing angels with, behind her, a lily often associated with Annunciation scenes. The third light is the main subject of these windows – *The Sacred Heart*, also accompanied by angels below and with a monstrance above – related, doubtless, to the symbolism of the Eucharistic Congress that took place in Ireland the year the window was made.

On the extreme right is *St. Patrick*, his right hand holding a shamrock, his left holding a book, and his left arm clasping a crozier close to his chest. He also appears at a smaller scale above, with beneath him, the figure of a king (*Lóegaire of Tara?*), and a small cleric with a crozier (*St. Benen?*). The Holy Spirit hovers above in the form of a dove. At the top of the window is *Christ the King*, flanked by angels carrying a scroll bearing the inscription AVE CHRISTE REX. At the bottom left is a tower above the word *ECCLESIA* – perhaps also inspired by the Eucharistic Congress. The window is unsigned, through it has been suggested that it was made by the Earley Studios, or by John Earley himself?

The north side chapel has in the north wall a Virgin in a gorgeous blue robe with the Holy Ghost above, and cherubs above and below, with attractive flower surrounds. The east wall of the side chapel has an *Annunciation* with angels above bearing a scroll with the words AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA. The Virgin kneels at a predieu, and the window is further decorated with more flower patterns. In the south chapel, *The Flight into Egypt* is shown above an angel appearing in a dream to the sleeping Joseph, accompanied by the inscription ARISE AND TAKE THE CHILD AND HIS MOTHER AND FLY INTO EGYPT. Beneath is the full figure of Joseph, accompanied by the inscription MODEL OF



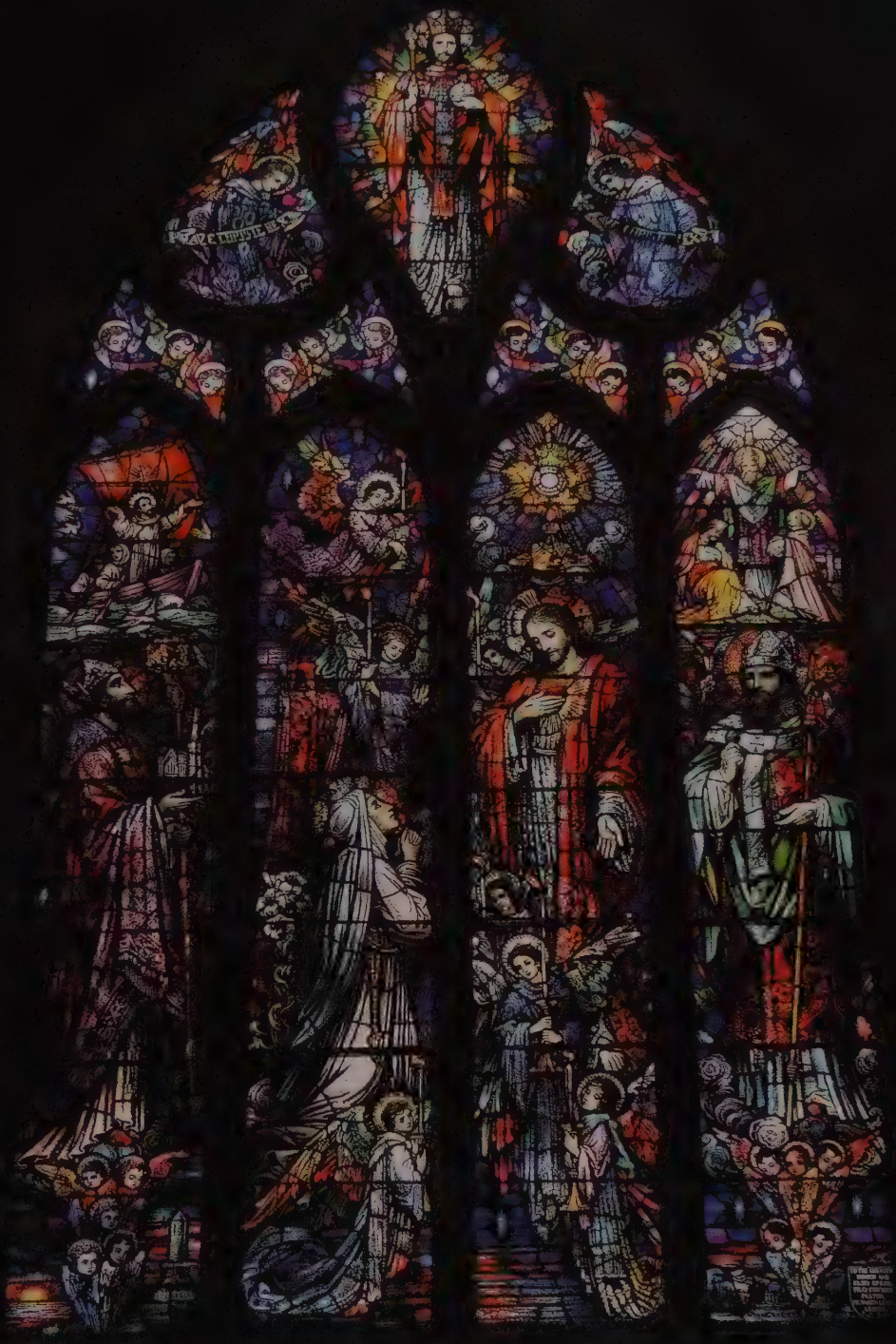
The bright interior of Eyrecourt parish church gives us some idea of what a medieval traceried window might have looked like when filled with colourful stained glass.

The north side-chapel of the Catholic church in Eyrecourt houses a tall *Annunciation* window, of *c.*1930, with the angel holding a scroll bearing the Latin inscription 'Hail Mary full of Grace', while beneath the Virgin is a shield with the words 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'.

OBEDIENCE, PRAY FOR US. This window is from a different workshop to the other figured windows. The remaining windows are plain.

The statues are of plaster. There is a gallery at the west end of the church, dominated by a large Crucifix. There is a small, but effective, wooden ceiling, and monuments to nineteenth-century parish priests in the north transept.

Nearby is Eyre's Church and graveyard for which Christy Cunniffe has prepared a conservation plan.



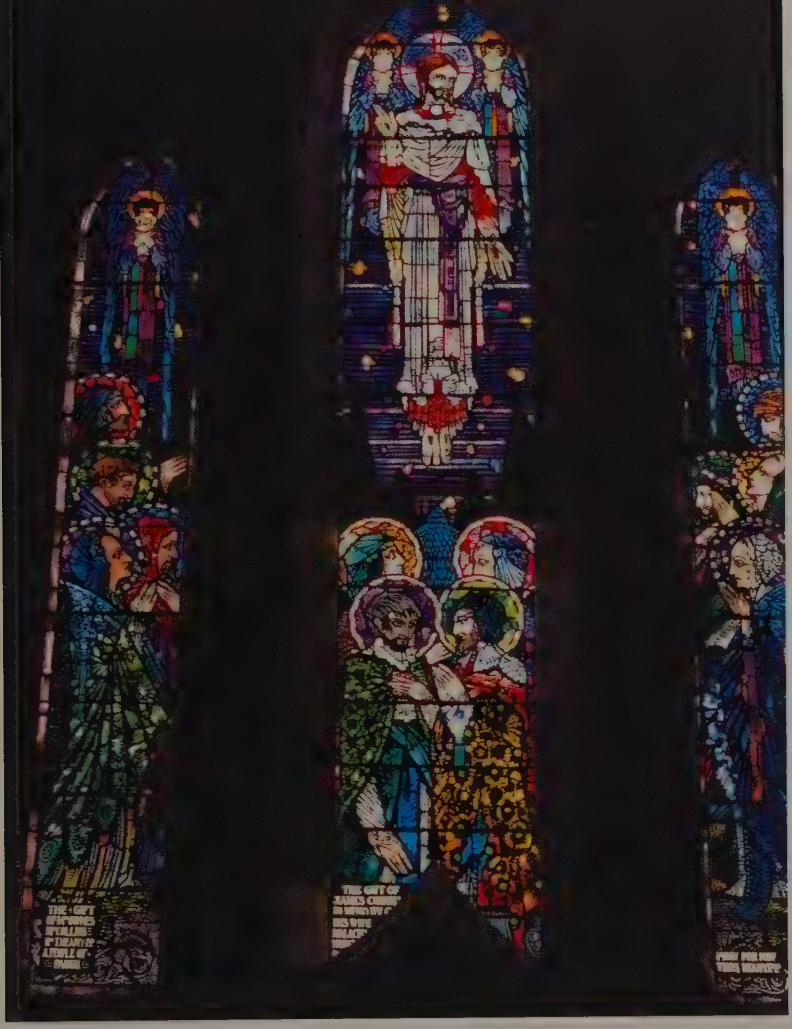
The Sacred Heart flanked by *St. Brendan* (left) and *St Patrick* (right) are the main focus in the fine (Earley Studios?) east window at Eyrecourt, which also features many smaller figures, including hosts of joyous angels.

The *Christ the King* window at Fohenagh, not far from Ahascragh, may have been commissioned to coincide with the Eucharistic Congress of 1932

The attractive water-font in the porch of Fohenagh church must be a left-over from an eighteenth-century church on the site.

35. Fohenagh Catholic Church

A RURAL CHURCH, a few miles east of Ahascragh, contains stained glass windows that include portraits of a number of saints. That on the left of the sanctuary has *St. Patrick* with shamrock, and, at a much smaller scale, SS. *Columba, Francis, Aidan, Ita, Dympna* and *Clare*. On the right in the sanctuary is *Christ the King*, with *Crucifixion* above, and it also includes the apostles *Philip, John, James* and *Andrew* on the left, and *Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew* and *Simon* on the right, with SS. *Peter and Paul* beside Christ's feet. An *Annunciation*, accompanied by the words 'Et Incarnatus Est' is to be found in the south wall. Two of the windows are dated 1932, the year of the Eucharistic Congress, and the dedicatory inscriptions are written in Irish.



36. Glenamaddy Catholic Church

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, near the centre of the village of Glenamaddy, is a hall-type nave and aisle church with octagonal pillars supporting the arches between them. It was built in 1904 to designs of Thomas Hamilton of Galway. Its main feature is the three-light east window which surprises and delights the visitor on entering the church. The main theme is *The Ascension* showing Christ in the middle

▲ The remarkable *Ascension* window in Glenamaddy Catholic church was probably produced by the studios of Harry Clarke shortly after the death of that great master craftsman in 1931.

accompanied by female-looking angels, with the lower parts of the windows made up of groups of two male and two female figures looking on – each with variegated colours in their richly-ornamented garments.

The window is not by Harry Clarke but by Harry Clarke Studios according to the great Harry Clarke expert, Nicola Gordon Bowe.

On the left side of the Sanctuary, opposite the Sacristy door, is the *Annunciation* window designed by Earley Stained-Glass Studios, Dublin, in 1952 for Fr. John Walsh, P.P.

The rose window, with the lamb in the centre, and placed above the west doorway, is of a much more recent vintage, designed by the studios of A.W. Lyons, Dublin.

The church was re-arranged by the parish priest, Fr Michael Goaley, in 1996 when a new altar, tabernacle and baptismal font of Portuguese sandstone were provided, and the old tabernacle was moved back in the sanctuary to a position behind the new altar.

A detail of the Harry Clarke studios window in Glenamaddy parish church shows four haloed and colourfully-attired apostles with wonderfully varied facial expressions standing beneath the feet of Christ ascending into heaven.

37. Gort Catholic Church

THE FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH was built on the site in 1825, but the present structure dates probably from much later in the same century. One of its best features is the mosaic tympanum over each side door in the wall facing the main street – St. *John the Baptist* on the left and St. *Colmán* (the local saint of Kilmacduagh and dedicatee of the church) on the right. The church has a nave with side aisles, and very shallow transepts – somewhat in the style of a later medieval church, with appropriately ornamental capitals. Following the liturgical changes encouraged by the Second Vatican Council, the altar has been brought forward in the sanctuary; it is decorated with a lamb – the *Agnus Dei* – flanked by roundels carved with harp-playing kings.

The tympanum above the southern side door of Gort Catholic Church is decorated with a late nineteenth-century mosaic of the local saint, Colmán of Kilmacduagh.

The Stations of the Cross are of coloured plaster, and in the porch there is a *Pietà* of Italian marble. In the vestibule, there is a holy water font of 1893 – perhaps indicative of the construction date of the present church. The stained glass windows are in the late nineteenth-century style of Meyer of Munich – a three-light in the south aisle devoted to *The Sacred Heart* and *The Virgin*. In the north aisle there is a *Virgin in a mandorla* appearing at Lourdes, flanked by an *Annunciation* and a *Visitation*. These, however, are unexceptional.

The medieval-style stone tracery of the east window of the reconstructed church at Gortanumera is filled with lively stained-glass figures surrounding the ascending *Christ* in the impressive depiction by John Earley of around the 1930s.

38. Gortanumera Church

THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION of the Lord at Gortanumera is of a neo-Gothic style and was built in 1934-1935. It is constructed to a cruciform plan with two transepts. The main entrance doorway is finely carved and had an interesting simple hood mounding.

There is an interesting story about the construction of the church. A disused stone-cut Church of Ireland church at Ballygar, 43 miles away, was purchased and demolished. Each of the stones, arches, windows and doors were marked and transported to Gortanumera and then used in the construction.

The large four-lancet switch-line traceried window behind the altar depicts *The Ascension of our Lord*, and was designed by John Earley. Other attractive features include the steeply-pitched roof and the elaborate Celtic revival altar railings.

39. Gurteen Catholic Church

AN ARCHITECT OF THE CALIBRE of Ralph Byrne may have been responsible for this slightly severe-looking neo-Romanesque church of dark limestone, the dated foundation stone for which was laid in 1931. At the foot of the tower is a doorway carved in the Romanesque Style, with scalloped capitals of a kind used also in the baptistery unusually placed in the apse at the western end of the church, and separated from it by an openwork metal grille.

Celtic revival traits are very much to the fore in the ornaments of the altar and lectern which feature interlace, some ending in animal heads. The most striking feature of the attractive interior of this well-kept church is the set of three stained glass windows representing *The Crucifixion*, (with Christ's hands raised) accompanied by the figures of *The Virgin* and *St. John*. The vibrant colouring and ornamental features are worthy of Harry Clarke himself but must, however, be the work of his studio, as he died in the year the foundation stone was laid.

Worthy of inspection, too, are the Stations of the Cross, carved in

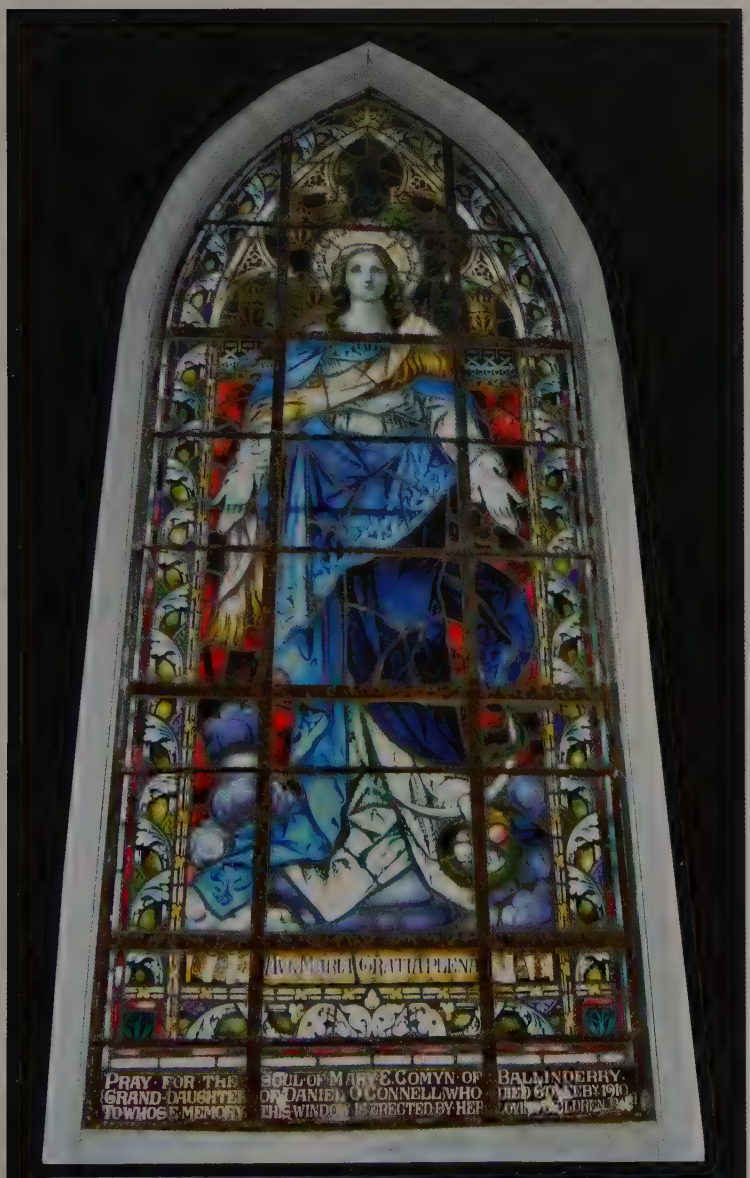
The highlight of the neat and cosy parish church of Gurteen is the three-light window of The Crucifixion of Christ, accompanied by the Virgin and St. John, perhaps a product of the Harry Clarke studios of the early 1920s.

wood in high and dramatic relief; scarcely Irish, they may be of Bavarian or Italian origin. A plaque in the south transept commemorated Fr Michael Griffin, a native of Gurteen who was shot in Galway in 1920, and further smaller tablets commemorate members of the Cogovan family which presented the sanctuary windows, and F.J. Finnerty, of Athlone, who donated the altar.

Fr Griffin is buried in the grounds of St. Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, under a monument executed by Michael Shortall.

40. Kilconnell Catholic Church

THE PORCH of the Catholic Church has an undated two-light window featuring *The Immaculate Conception*, *The Holy Family*, *St. Anthony* and Kilconnell Friary, which may be Harry Clarke Studios from the 1930s. In the sanctuary there is also a window of *The Virgin* dating from around 1910.



The Virgin Mary window inserted around 1910 in Kilconnell Catholic church was executed in a traditional style without showing any influence of the Celtic Revival

41. Killeenadeema

THE WELL PRESERVED church standing on a dominant location at Killeenadeema, is T-shaped in plan and dates probably to the earlier nineteenth century. However, it may have been altered in the 1930s when the east wall was given a new shape, with an angular apse for the altar and, one suspects, the taking out of an original east window behind it to be replaced by a pair of more recent two light windows. These, in turn, are flanked on each side by a two-light window – and the impression made by all of these windows together on entering the church is quite remarkable. Going from left to right (i.e. from north to south) along the east wall that forms the top of the T, the windows are as follows;

1. a) A female saint with sword and trampling on a dragon (St. Dympna), and with a dove beside her.
   b) St. Brendan with boat.
2. a) Annunciation

▲ The altar of the Catholic church at Killeenadeema is flanked by windows of the 1930s, one combining the sword-bearing *St. Dympna* and *St. Brendan* with his oratory (signed 'Harry Clarke Stained Glass'), and another with *The Annunciation* and *The Birth of Christ* seen opposite.

b) Birth of Christ with the figure of Isaiah above.

3. a) Christ laid in the tomb
   b) The Resurrection with the figure of David on top.
4. a) St. Patrick
   b) St. Brigid with, above, the figure of a bishop laying his hand on the head of a nun.

The inscriptions on these windows are in Irish, that in the window on the extreme right being inserted in a shield shape, suggesting that it may have been made by Earley of Dublin, as the same kind of shield appears on the signed John Earley window in St. Michaels church in Ballinasloe of 1940. The date of these windows may belong to within a decade of that date.

There is what looks like an older Crucifixion window incorporated into a larger window above the gallery over the west doorway.

The Stations of the Cross are much more recent and of carved wood.

42. Killererin

AS FAR AS CAN BE ASCERTAINED, Killererin Church was built in the period 1840-1848 by Fr John McLoughlin, perhaps during the famine itself. It was totally reconstructed in 1956/1960 under the late Fr Michael Burke PP. The architect at the time was Vincent B Gallagher of Dublin.

The Stations of the Cross were painted by Owen Walsh, a native of

'Jesus consoles the Women' – one of the Killererin Stations of the Cross by Owen Walsh.

Westport. It was he who also designed the stained glass window which depicts *The Crucifixion* in three panels over the altar and the centre panels of *The Madonna and St. Joseph with the infant Jesus* in the two transepts of the church.

The stained glass windows in the west gable were commissioned to commemorate the Jubilee Year of Christ 2000. These windows were designed by George Walsh.

The medieval church in the adjoining cemetery probably dated from the eleventh or twelfth century. A sandstone embossed Cross, dating from the 9th – 12th century, was unearthed on that site in 1989. It is now on permanent display in the church.

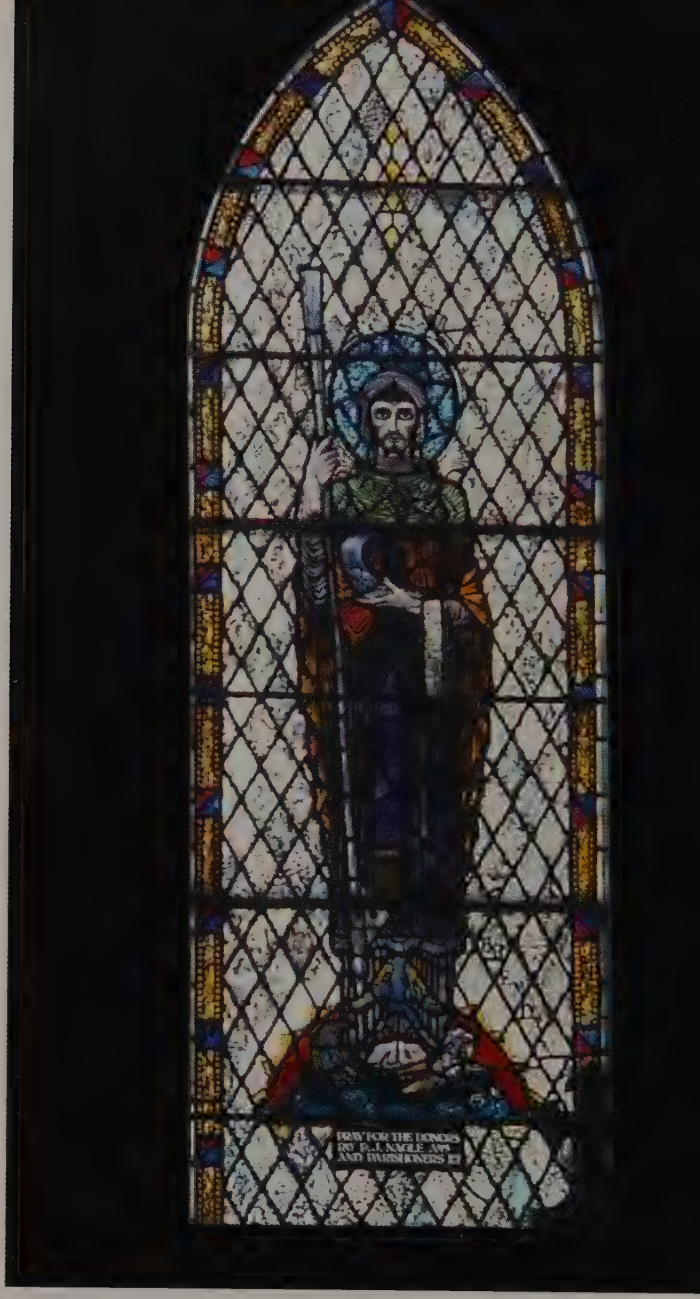
43. Kiltormer Catholic Church

AN ATTRACTIVE, well-kept nineteenth-century parish church, with a recent incongruous porch to protect a new door inserted at the junction of nave and transept. The sanctuary has recently been totally renovated, with much use of wood for the altar, tabernacle, lectern etc.

One of the main items of interest are the stained glass windows – including the unusually low two-light east window, with *Christ* and *The Virgin* occupying lights, with *St. Patrick* above holding a crozier and clad in a green vestment. The windows in the transepts show *St. Columcille* on the north and *St. Brendan*, with his oar, on the south. The east window has floral surrounds for the figures, whereas the two Irish saints are framed by a kind of frosted white glass.

The figured windows are signed Clarke of Dublin.

Other items worth noting are the nineteenth-century baptismal font (with new copper covering) which has an attractive small carving of St. Patrick. In the western porch there are water stoups or fonts presumably from an earlier church – one inscribed IAK 99 (presumably 1799) and the other MK 1829 – significantly the year of Catholic Emancipation.



▲

The squat bishop attacking a serpent with his crozier carved on a baptismal font in the church of Kiltormer looks as if a nineteenth-century parish priest may have stood in as a model for St. Patrick.

The saint in the south window of Kiltormer church can be identified as Brendan, the diocesan patron, through his oar and the boat he holds in his left hand.

The large *Holy Family* window of 1930 in Killure Catholic Church has a rather old-fashioned base, but the clothes worn by the figures seem to be almost an advertisment for Irish fabrics current at the time.

44. Killure Catholic Church

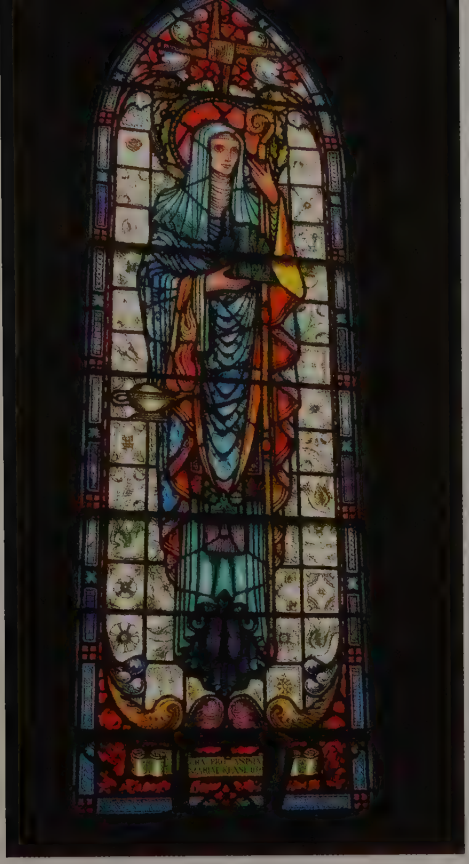
THE SMALL UNASSUMING, rectangular church at Killure scarcely four miles south of Ahascragh was built in 1835, reconstructed in 1930 and has a window representing The *Holy Family* *c.* 1930 in the north wall, which is in need of repair. There is also a powerful and colourful *Crucifixion* of the same date. Neither are signed, both a product of the same studio, but which?

45. Labane

LABANE CATHOLIC CHURCH is a nineteenth-century structure that was entirely renovated in 1965. It owes its interesting interior almost entirely to the generosity of the Martyn family of Tullira not far away, two generations of which have contributed to make the church interior one of the more visually exciting in the whole county.

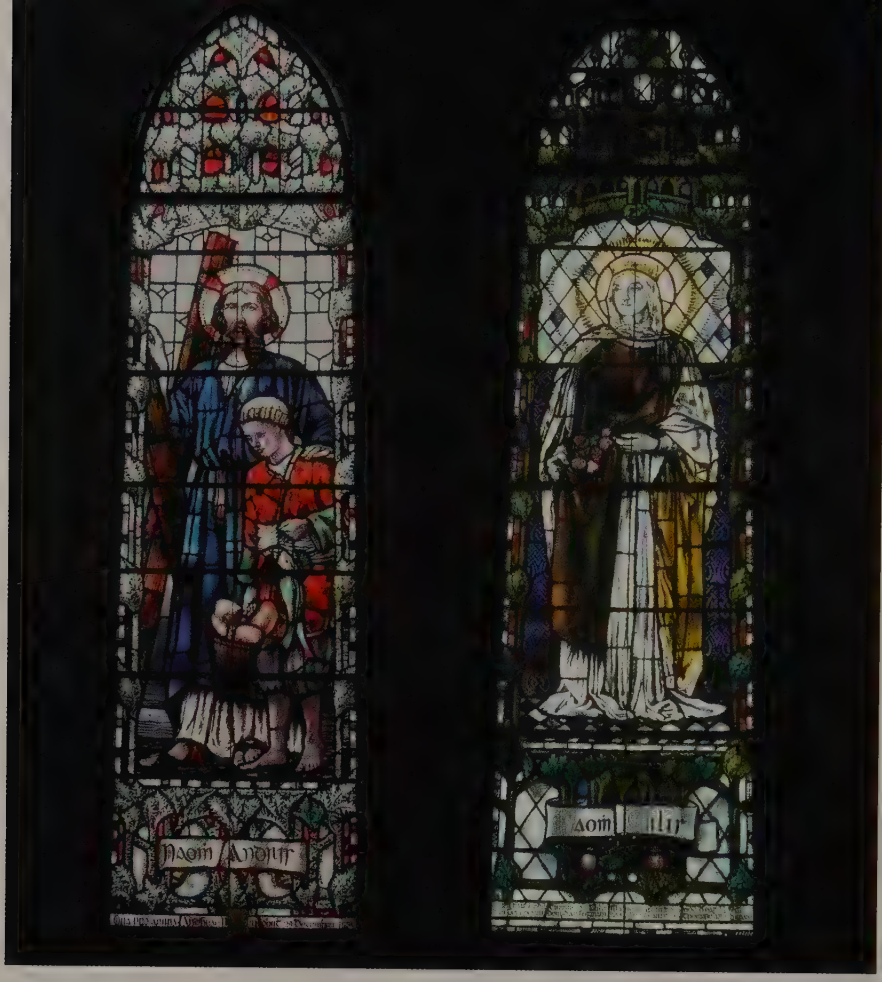
There are four separate periods (and at least as many artists) involved in the stained glass windows. The oldest are the three lights of the *Blessed*

It may have been praying in front of this non-native window of 1880 behind the altar at Labane that inspired Edward Martyn to use his own church here as the springboard to launch the idea for a new Irish school of stained glass which was to flourish in Dublin.



The very early twentieth-century window of *St. Brigid* at Labane, complete with her cross above her head, is framed by square panels of decorative flowers and birds strongly influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement.

Virgin Mary, *Christ* and *John the Baptist*, behind the main altar, donated by Mrs. Martyn in memory of her husband John and her son John Joseph. The medievalising style is that common around the 1880s, though the maker's name is not recorded on it. Flanking them in the chancel are two windows commemorating Mary Keane – *St. Brigid* in the north wall, and in the south wall *St. Teresa of Avila* (bearing a book entitled *The Interior Castle*, which this great mystic nun wrote in 1588 to illuminate the progress of the Christian soul towards God). These are decorated with bird and plant surrounds suggesting the influence of William Morris on Edward Martyn (1889-1923), who featured prominently in the lives and works of Yeats, Lady Gregory and George Moore, among others. Rejecting the factory style of the east windows, he believed that "the artists of Ireland should decorate the churches" – and brought over an English artist, Christopher Whall, a disciple of William Morris, to show them how to design windows for Labane church. Whall sent A.E. Child over to Ireland to do windows for Loughrea Cathedral, but it was another



On opposite walls of the nave of Labane church are windows of *St. Andrew* (*Naomh Andrís* in Irish lettering), designed by A.E. Child and painted by Michael Healy (or Sarah Purser c.1902), and *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary* (*Naomh Eilís*, also in Gaelic script), designed by Christopher Whall and painted in 1910-12 by Ethel Rhind (who also did the Stations of the Cross in Loughrea Cathedral).

London-based artist Selwyn Image (1849-1930) who Child brought over to Labane to do the two most easterly windows in the nave at Labane – *Saint Anna* and *Saint Robertus* (frontispiece) – which are infused with the same animal and plant motifs as the Brigid and Teresa windows in the chancel.

These were executed in memory of Robert Mac Dermott who died in 1880 and Anna Maria Josephine Martyn who died in 1898, thus providing a date of around 1900 or shortly afterwards for these windows. Their inscriptions are in Latin, providing a notable contrast with the next

grouping of windows, where the saints' names are given in Irish, as are also the commemorative inscriptions. The first of these is *Naomh Andrís*, in memory of Andrew Martyn who died in 1878. This window, featuring St. Andrew carrying his X-shaped cross and thistles alluding to Scotland, whose patron saint he is, is thought to have been designed by Child, and painted by Michael Healy with the assistance of the Clare-born artist Catherine O'Brien. But John O'Grady, in his book on Sarah Purser, claims that it was Purser who executed the window in 1902. That was the year before the foundation of *An Túr Gloine*, the most famous stained glass studio of twentieth-century Ireland, and the church at Labane, through the combination of Martyn, Whall, Image and Child, can thus be seen to have played a seminal role in its beginning – and, thus, also in the history of stained glass in Ireland. That is also the importance of Labane in the history of Irish art!

The Risen Christ window next to St. Andrew is a throw-back from an earlier generation, but opposite it is *Naomh Eilís, St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, spreading flowers, with an inscription in Irish commemorating Elizabeth Mary Corraidin, who died in 1900. The figure of the saint is flanked by Celtic interlace, and this window was produced around 1910-12 by Ethel Rhind after a design by Christopher Whall. This is just one of a number of examples at Labane where the people being commemorated have windows illustrating the saint after whom they were called. Another is a second Rhind window taken out from the nave and consigned to the staircase in the entrance porch – *Naomh Peadar*, a tall and rather heavy piece of work lacking the lighter colour of Rhind's other window. It was created in 1910 to commemorate Peter Martyn. Balancing it on the other side is a much more modern window, a *Resurrection*, by an unnamed artist. In the same porch is a holy water font of 1819 commemorating the Rev. John Nolan – probably preserved from an earlier church.

One other surprising and unusual feature of the church is the baldachin above the altar, very italianate, early twentieth century, and bearing evangelist symbols, as well as *St. John the Baptist* and what we may take to be a Pope. Killanin and Duignan in *The Shell Guide* speculate that it is the work of Michael Shortall to designs by William Scott. The bases bear birds (including a swan), a lamb and a lion – the latter two at least of religious significance.

46. Loughrea: St. Brendan's Cathedral

FROM THE OUTSIDE, Loughrea Cathedral might not seem to differ greatly from any other post-Emancipation neo-Gothic church in a large Irish town – with its tall spire pointing heavenwards above a well-built nave-and-chancel structure with side-aisles, transepts and an apse, designed by W.J. Byrne of Dublin and built between 1897 and 1903. But inside, it becomes *the* outstanding showcase for the variety of stained glass produced by *An Túr Gloine* ('the tower of glass'), stained glass being arguably Ireland's greatest contribution to European art of the twentieth century. Only one of the studio's major artists is missing – Wilhelmine Geddes – and the Cathedral also lacks any windows by Harry Clarke, the greatest master of them all, whose studio was given none of the work, because all the commissions went to *An Túr Gloine*. But the Cathedral is not just a treasure-house of stained glass – it also demonstrates the Arts and Crafts movement at work through the carvings of Michael Shortall and, to a lesser extent, his teacher John Hughes, and the adjoining museum has tapestries of the Dun Emer Guild.

All of this came about through a serendipitous set of circumstances – the birth of Edward Martyn in Loughrea, in the diocese of Clonfert, and the positive reaction to his idea for the re-vitalisation of Irish art by the bishop and his parish administrator, the Reverend Jeremiah O'Donovan. Martyn is one of Ireland's insufficiently-appreciated heroes who vigorously espoused the cause of the Irish Revival, the Gaelic League and, along with his neighbour, Lady Augusta Gregory, the Irish Literary Theatre. His wish to have Irish churches decorated by Irish artists first took root in his own parish church at Labane, but fortunately coincided with the building of the diocesan Cathedral at Loughrea, where his benign influence is everywhere to be felt.

The very first window to be created was by the foundress of *An Túr*

◀ Michael Healy's many contributions to the stained glass of Loughrea Cathedral over a 36-year period improved all the time and culminated in his two great windows in the west transept, one of which is *The Ascension* of 1936 with its scintillating range of colours.

One of those artists who was recalled again and again to contribute glass to Loughrea Cathedral was A.E. Child (1868–1951), an Englishman who knew how to utilise Irish lettering in his 1937 window of *St. Patrick lighting the Paschal Fire*, in the east aisle, as he had taken Irish lessons from Padraic Pearse.

Gloine, the redoubtable Sarah Purser, whose *St. Brendan* of 1903 decorates the church porch. It was followed in the same year by the three windows of the (curtailed) apse, *Annunciation*, *Agony in the Garden* and *Resurrection* by A.E. Child, who had been brought from London by Martyn to kick-start the new native stained-glass industry. The two artists were to co-operate eight years later on the *Nativity* window in the east transept. Both contributed too, but with separate windows, to the baptistery – Child adding *The Baptism of Christ* and Sarah Purser (along with Catherine O'Brien) the *St. Ita* window – the latter showing Child's influence, for instance, in the butterfly decoration on the angel's dress. There was also a third contributor to the baptistery windows – Michael Healy, whose *St. Simeon* is still traditional in some aspects, but which is also beginning to show the riotous blues and reds which were to dominate his many contributions to the Cathedral, prime among them his much later *Ascension* of 1936 and the memorable *Last Judgment* of 1937-40, both in the west transept.

One of the remarkable features of the Cathedral's glass is, indeed, how many of the artists were brought – and came – back again and again

The porch of Loughrea Cathedral contains its earliest and latest windows, both small: Sarah Purser's *St. Brendan* of 1903, and Patrick Pye's *St. Brigid* of 1957.

Michael Shortall (1868–1951) carved almost all of the capitals and corbels in Loughrea Cathedral, providing dramatic illustrations of incidents in the history of the diocese, as well as events in the life of titular saint, including his baptism by St. Erc illustrated here.

The only capitals in Loughrea not by Michael Shortall are the two at the chancel arch, that shown below representing the Evangelist *Luke*. Both were commissioned for the Cathedral's centenary from the sculptor Tom Glendon, who has cleverly adapted Shortall's models to suit his individual style.

The Holy Family rose window above the eastern side altar in Loughrea Cathedral shows Michael Healy following the facial expressions in the glass of Sarah Purser, the founder of *An Túr Gloine* which employed him, yet beginning at the same time to develop his own vivid colouring as early as 1907.

to enhance the coloured light of the Cathedral over many years. Healy's contributions span almost forty years for, in addition to the windows just mentioned, he also produced three in 1907 – *The Virgin and Child* and *Holy Family* over the side altars, *St. Anthony* in the east aisle, and three for the west aisle in the 1930s – *Christ the King*, *Queen of Heaven* and *St. Joseph*. Child, too, was brought back after a quarter of a century for his *SS. Clare and Francesca* in the east transept of 1929, as well as *The Centurion* (1934) and *St. Patrick* (1937) in the east aisle.

Other interesting names, too, flicker through the noble roll-call of those who have made the stained glass in the Cathedral an absolute must on any cultural tour of Connacht – Beatrice Elvery (Lady Glenavy), who co-operated with Sarah Purser on the three-light *Crucifixion* in the east transept (1908), Hubert McGoldrick (*Sacred Heart* and *St. Margaret Mary* of 1908 in a side chapel), not to mention the great Evie Hone with her *St. Brigid* of 1942, and whose electrifying *Creation* of 1950 in the rose window is the final surprise on turning around to leave the church. The latest window is another *St. Brigid* of 1957, this time by Patrick Pye – the only one of the artists still thankfully with us.

In addition to all of this wonderful glass, there is also fine carving in

The altar-rails of Loughrea Cathedral are decorated with these bronze panels of angels by Michael Shortall (1868–1951), illustrating the theme of sacred music – a subject dear to Edward Martyn's heart.

A late-comer to the team of *An Túr Gloine* artists contributing windows to Loughrea Cathedral was Evie Hone (1894–1955), who added greatly to the collection with her *St. Brigid distributing bread* 1942, which shows her distinctive pinky-mauve tints in the clothing of the poor girl receiving food from the saint.

The serious serenity of the blessed, separated by the river of perdition from the writhing drama of the damned below, makes a striking contrast in Michael Healy's final *Last Judgement* window of 1936-40 in the west transept of Loughrea Cathedral.

the church. John Hughes's *Virgin and Child* above a side altar is a masterly study of movement. But the majority of the sculptures are by his pupil, Michael Shortall, whose work is mainly found on the four sides of each capital supporting the aisle arcade on both sides of the church. These illustrate the life and voyage of St. Brendan, patron of the Cathedral, as well as other incidents in the history of the diocese which are each provided with a date to identify the event portrayed. Capitals with the evangelist symbols of SS. Luke and John were carved by Tom Glendon in 2003. In addition, there are interesting corbels in the sanctuary, one showing Faith (*Creideamh*) and another St. *Patrick as a shepherd* – an early

The high altar of Loughrea Cathedral is crowned by a canopy enclosing the sensitively-modelled bronze figure of *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* with attendant angels. It is the work of John Hughes (1865–1941), who modelled it in 1902 and had it cast in Paris three years later. Its composition reflects his love of Italian Renaissance sculpture.

Among the many and varied treasures in Loughrea Cathedreal are the *opus sectile* Stations of the Cross by Ethel Rhind (*c.*1879–1952), whose speciality in this unusual medium helped gain her admission to the studio of *An Túr Gloine*, where she also produced two stained glass windows for Labane church. On this twelfth Station representing *The Crucifixion*, she uses Irish lettering and an Irish text for her caption.

instance of a sculptor trying to escape from the ubiquitous representation of the National Apostle as a patriarchal mitred bishop. Shortall also contributed bronze angels of Italian renaissance inspiration for the altar rails. Not to be overlooked either are the *opus sectile* Stations of the Cross by Ethel Rhind (1928-33).

Mention has already been made of the work of the Dun Emer Guild, established by Evelyn Gleeson, daughter of an Irish surgeon from Athlone and who, after studying in England, moved to Dublin and set up the weaving Guild with the aid of the two Yeats sisters, Lily and Elizabeth. For Loughrea, they wove banners after designs prepared by the sisters' brother Jack, and they also wove vestments, which are in the Museum building – a wonderful collection of diocesan and other art inspired by the late Fr. P.K. Egan, who also wrote the best account of the Cathedral in 1986. The museum also contains one of the best assemblages of medieval statuary surviving from medieval Ireland – the Kilcorban Madonna, St. Catherine from Tynagh, as well as a further Madonna and Child and St. Joseph from Killoran. Furthermore, the Museum contains a valuable collection of vestments and chalices, penal crosses and rosary beads.

There are Stations of the Cross by Evie Hone in Kiltullagh Church located near Esker Monastery between Loughrea and Athenry.

The most notable feature of the Catholic church at Peterswell is the window depicting *Our Lady of the Rosary* by Evie Hone, erected in honour of a local priest who died in 1939.

47. Peterswell

PETERSWELL CHURCH, at the foot of the Slieve Aughty hills, is an attractive T-shaped church which, according to a plaque, was built in 1840 by the Rev. Patrick O'Connor and his parishioners, while another plaque – near the entrance – states that the tower was added in 1947 by the Rev. Larkin during the episcopal reign of Michael Browne.

It has a gallery at the back of the church, but its main claim to our interest is the single-light window close to the door of *Our Lady of the Rosary* by Evie Hone, arguably the finest of the many women who were producing stained glass windows in twentieth-century Ireland. Dating from 1950, it shows women on their knees in front of the Virgin who bears a rosary, and it reflects Evie Hone's devotion to the Mother of Christ after her conversion to Catholicism in 1937. It has attractive greens, blues and reds, and was erected to the memory of the Rev. John Keely, a native of the parish, who died in 1939.

In the church at Tirneevin, George Walsh's rendering of the story of St. Colmán shows him receiving the land for his foundation of the monastery at Kilmacduagh from his royal kinsman Guaire Aidhne in the seventh century.

In his St. Colmán window at Tirneevin, George Walsh includes not only the tale of the dishes which flew through the air to feed the saint and his disciple in his hermitage, but also a cock, a mouse and a fly, the last perhaps a reference to the horsefly which was associated with the O'Heyne family who built a church at the saint's famous monastery at Kilmacduagh.

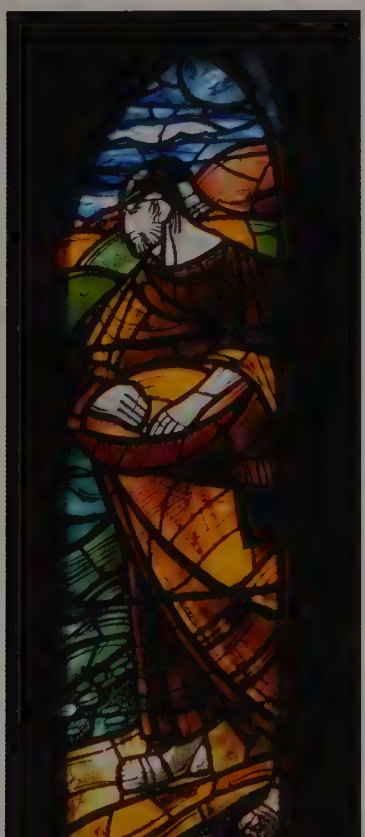
48. Tirneevin

TIRNEEVIN IS A COMPARATIVELY small nineteenth-century rectangular church without transepts but with a pointed Gothic arch separating the nave from the raised chancel. An altar, with an unsigned painting of the *Christ-child being presented to the kneeling St. Francis*, has been erected forward of the old altar which has been left standing to carry the tabernacle. Behind it is the east window, in the style of the fifteenth century, and filled with glass, about one third of which bears an unsigned representation of Kilmacduagh – showing the Round Tower on the left and the Cathedral in the centre and right.

Better quality are the three windows in the north wall, two by George Walsh flanking one by George Campbell in the centre. That nearest to the west wall is inscribed

Bunadh Chill Mac Duaich

(the founding of Kilmacduagh), showing the saint and, on a smaller scale, his kinsman King Guaire Aidhne, and a group of monks. The most attractive part of the window, which is signed and dated 1975, is the



George Campbell's powerful *Sower and his Seed* at Tirneevin, manufactured for him by the Abbey Stained Glass Studios around the early 1960s, was one of the artist's rare, but successful, ventures into the colourful world of stained glass.

bottom showing a fly, a mouse in black and white and a coloured cockerel, together with plates which illustrate one of the most famous legends associated with the saint, and which has given rise to the name of the old pilgrimage road known as 'the road of the dishes' (see pp 20-21). Kilmacduagh is a suitable subject for a window as it is situated only a few miles away.

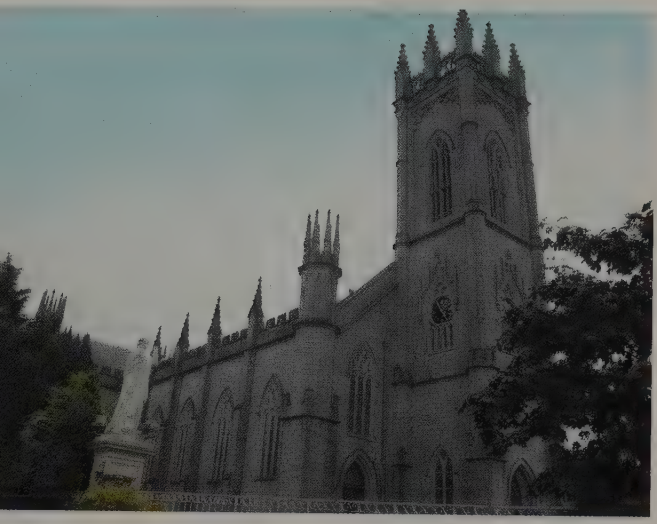
The second George Walsh window is a somewhat more sentimental rendering of *The Virgin and Child*, with St. Joseph above and a lamb below. It is signed by George Walsh and, though not dated, is unlikely to be very different in date to his other window.

Though good in quality, both of these windows suffer by comparison with the George Campbell window between them, which represents *The Sower and his Seed*. It is a blaze of orange, blue and red and is one of the most powerful windows in East Galway, showing the value of the interesting experiment of getting a professional painter to design a window which, in this case, was – according to an inscription – executed by the Abbey Stained Glass Studio in Dublin. It dates to around the early 1960s. Other windows, particularly in the added porch are not of artistic significance. The Stations of the Cross are painted but do not appear to reveal the name of the artist.

49. Tuam Catholic Cathedral

THE DECISION TO BUILD the Cathedral Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Tuam archdiocese was taken in 1827, two years before Catholic Emancipation. Archbishop Oliver Kelly (1815-34), whose portrait hangs in the porch beneath his obituary, was the prime mover and, though dogged by ill-health, he did great work to get the project underway. The architect appointed was Dominic Madden, who had already designed the Cathedral in Ballina, Co. Mayo, and was shortly afterwards to win the competition to do the same at Ennis. Money proved to be a major problem, and Madden resigned in 1829 when he realised that financial stringencies would not allow his chancel to be built in its entirety. He later went on to win acclaim in South

The transepts of the nineteenth-century Catholic Cathedral in Tuam were enhanced in 1961 by the insertion of two large windows by Richard King (1907–74), this one representing *Christ with outstretched hands*. The other Richard King window in the Catholic Cathedral in Tuam shows *St. Jarlath* in the centre, raising his hand in blessing. The cart-wheel shown behind the saint refers to the story that he would found a monastery wherever his cart broke down – which was at Tuam, whose patron saint he was to become.



▲ Thomas Farrell's statue of Archbishop MacHale stands blessing outside his Catholic Cathedral in Tuam that was begun in the late 1820s by his predecessor Oliver Kelly.

The most striking features of the interior of the Catholic Cathedral in Tuam are Michael O'Connor's five-light window of *The Virgin and the Four Evangelists* of the 1830s, and the plasterwork of the vaulted ceiling of almost a century later.

America. He was replaced by Roscommon man Marcus Murray, who revised Madden's plan and whose son William was responsible for the high altar and the tall tower with formidable crocketed pinnacles above the entrance doorway. The Cathedral was already roofed when Archbishop Kelly died in 1834, and was consecrated a few years later by his successor John MacHale. The building debt was not paid off until 1928, immediately following which the original wooden ceiling had to be removed because of the activity of the black-watch beetle, and replaced by the present plaster-vaulted ceiling. The organ had to be replaced for the same reason.

There is a striking east window of *The Virgin and the Four Evangelists* by Michael O'Connor, of Dublin, a stained-glass artist who later went on to make a name for himself in Victorian England. This window, which also contains the coats of arms of many families which contributed to the Cathedral's building fund, may have been part of Madden's original

One of the carved caricatures on the Catholic Cathedral in Tuam.

chancel design, but would have been installed around 1832 when Murray had already been put in charge of construction. The Tuam Herald reported that the window was badly damaged in the night of the Great Wind in 1839, so O'Connor may have been recalled to re-glaze the missing parts. Otherwise, the most striking windows are those in the north and south transepts by Richard King – one of *Christ* with SS. *Patrick* and *Benen*, signed and dated 1961, and the other of Tuam's patron saint, *Jarlath*.

The Stations of the Cross are painted, nineteenth-century Italian, except the eighth, which is a more recent copy. In the south transept is another Italian painting, the late-seventeenth century *Assumption of the Virgin* by Carlo Maratta, presented by Sir William Gregory, husband of the famous Lady Gregory.

Post Vatican II re-arrangements saw the marble high altar being brought forward, and a new episcopal throne constructed by the local

craftsman Al O'Dea. Further re-ordering in 1992 saw a new granite altar, tabernacle and baptismal font. A new screen, creating a kind of sacristy behind the high altar, has the disadvantage of hiding some of the lower parts of the O'Connor window from view. The statue of Archbishop MacHale outside the Cathedral is by the eminent Victorian sculptor Sir Thomas Farrell. According to Tony Claffey, the statue matching that of Archbishop MacHale in the cathedral grounds is an exact likeness of Tuam-born Thomas Henry Burke, Under-Secretary for Ireland who was assassinated in the Phoenix Park, May 1882! At the request of the sculptor, Sir Thomas Farrell, the under-secretary stood in for his namesake and fellow-townsman William Burke (+1834) whose memory Archbishop MacHale wished to honour because of his remarkable charitable bequests to Tuam.

Remarkable on the exterior of the church is the fine collection of carved stone heads, both natural and caricature. The clock on the tower was installed in 1859, as a result of unusual circumstances. Some poteen makers in West Galway, when discovered by police making their illicit brew, hid their still in a pile of sand and lime about to be used for repairing the local church. When the cache was discovered, the law had no alternative but to fine the parish priest £100 for the deliction. A fund launched to repay the P.P. turned out to be oversubscribed and, when the Lord Lieutenant quashed the initial fine, it was decided that the money should be donated to some charitable cause within the diocese – and so the Cathedral clock became the object of that charity.

A statue of St Jarlath's wheel was erected in the grounds in 2000.

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DR. PETER HARBISON, member of the Royal Irish Academy, Honorary Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Art and Honorary Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, is the author of many books on Irish art and archaeology, including The Golden Age of Irish Art, 600 -1200, The Crucifixion in Irish Art, and Treasures of Ireland. His Guide to the National and Historic Monument of Ireland has been the standard work on the subject for thirty five years.

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BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Left: *St. Brigid distributing bread* 1942, stained glass window designed by Evie Hone in Loughrea Cathedral.

Top right: Romanesque window of c.1200 in the east wall of the Cathedral at Annaghdown.

Bottom right: A detail of the Harry Clarke studios remarkable *Ascension* window, 1931, in Glenamaddy parish church.

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